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OR,

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THE WHITE OUTLAW;

OR,

THE BRANDED BRIGAND.

CHAPTER I.

THE MINER'S CAMP.

THE sun was just disappearing from sight, when a clear, cheery voice called out:

"Saturday night, boys, and supper all ready. I see 'Pig's-eye,' yonder, shaking his dish-clout for us to come. Come along--let's knock off. I've done my last stroke of work until next Monday morning."

The speaker, a tall, muscular son of Anak, shouldered his tools and strode swiftly over the rough, uneven heaps of clay and stones that had been turned up, mole-like, by the miners in their search for gold.

He was followed shortly by some half-dozen men, of different ages, and appearance quite as varied, and ere long the entire party were seated around a rude slab-table, discussing the hot, smoking viands that had been prepared for them by Soo Chin, their queer little Chinese cook.

The hanging lamp, manufactured from a tin dish, some three inches deep, filled with grease and three wicks made from twisted rags, lighted up the interior of the hut, aided by the huge fire on the rude hearthstone, and plainly revealed the features of the gold-miners. As most of them have a part to play in our story, a description of the group may not be amiss.

The one who has already spoken sits at the head of the table and appears to be acknowledged as a kind of leader, although, in reality, one is as high in power as the other. They work each "on his own hook."

His name is Donald Mylne, a Scotchman by birth, but his

name is the only evidence one can see, outwardly at least, that such is the case. He saw his third birthday in Illinois, where his parents died, one when he was seven, the other in his tenth year. Then he was taken in charge by his uncle, who proved himself a harsh, if well-meaning man. But he had no children of his own, and could not understand the nature of Donald.

He was of a wild, impetuous, daring disposition, who could not be driven, but with words of kindness he could be made to do any thing. Thus, under the rule of Allan Cranford, he became unmanageable, ending finally by running away from home in his fifteenth year.

Since then he had roamed far, and was but another instance of the truth of the old adage, "a rolling stone gathers no moss." He had starved and feasted, had made and lost a good fortune ; had lived like a prince, and then in a few short weeks was reduced to work for his board.

And after this he still possessed a kind, uncorrupted heart ; his constitution had not been injured by his dissipation and excesses ; he was still the generous, frank, cheery youth, at heart, if not in age.

As he sits in his rough mining attire, red-flannel shirt with wide collar, flowing open from his bronzed, sturdy throat, his thick, glossy mane of light-brown hair pushed carelessly back from the broad, white forehead, so different in hue from the ruddy, sunburnt cheeks ; the long, tawny mustache and imperial ; the large, keen gray eyes, that would quail at nothing ; his broad shoulders and deep, massive chest—all lighted up by the ruddy glow of the huge, crackling fire, it was indeed a pleasing picture to gaze upon.

And then his voice—a deep, rich, yet mellow base—was in perfect keeping with his appearance. Such was Donald Mylne.

We have been thus minute, because the manner in which he spent his youth may account for, and in part palliate, some of his actions, hereafter to be described.

At Donald's right hand sat one, a perfect contrast to him in both figure and features. Still he was one who would not fail to attract, if not command attention. This was jolly Jan Weber, or "Fatty," as he was more generally termed.

The epithet *fat* was well chosen when applied to friend Jan, and his favorite boast was that he could *crawl* in deeper water than he could wade! Perhaps he laid himself open to a slight charge of exaggeration on this point, but be that as it may, you could scarcely find a person who more nearly resembled a *ball* than did our sturdy, phlegmatic Dutchman.

He was dressed in a complete suit of tanned deer-skin—I really fear to say how many it took to clothe him—even to his cap: the visor made of several thicknesses sewed together. His waist was clasped with a broad belt of the same material, gayly embroidered with bright-colored beads and stained quills: evidently a *gage d'amour*; for Jan was quite an Adonis among the dusky Venuses yclept squaws.

In this belt was stuck a huge meerschaum, capable of holding a large handful of the soothing weed; and his greatest enjoyment was to lie on his stomach before the fire and smoke this miniature volcano.

There was one spot in the hut that he usually occupied, probably because there was an oval depression that fitted him as well as if what Donald said was true: that he had hollowed it out so as to lie comfortably.

Then came one whom we can not describe. He was good-looking, rather tall, well made, of dark complexion, and a changeable voice; but there was something about him that repelled, even as it attracted. You instinctively felt that he was not a man to be trusted, yet you would trust him with your last dollar if he asked you to do so.

We can only add that his name was Enoch Mozey, and that he was apparently forty years old. But even that was guess-work, and might be ten years, either way, from the truth.

Next came Timothy Jenkins, a genuine full-blooded "Yankee," direct from the land of "steady habits and wooden nutmegs," alias Connecticut.

His "make-up" consists of a pair of legs so long and thin as to resemble pipe-stems, clad in rough, butternut-colored jeans; a short, stubby body clothed in a yellow waistcoat and tight roundabout jacket. Then comes a long, crane-like neck, topped off with a small, bullet head, covered with rough, tow-colored hair. This head is ornamented by a huge pair

of ears, great goggle eyes, long, thin nose, and a wide mouth that is drawn down at the corners, almost cutting off the pointed chin from the rest of the face.

Taken altogether, he was homely—absolutely ugly—but when one became acquainted with him, they did not notice this. There was a kind, genial manner about him, and his comrades loved him, despite the rough, uncouth mask that covered his unvarying good-nature and many sterling qualities.

Willie Herbert was a rosy-cheeked, merry youth of perhaps eighteen. He looked more like a girl than the brave, iron-nerved person he in reality was, but he had been tried, and was not found wanting. He was the darling and pet of the camp. All made love to him, owing to the lack of better game, for a white woman was a *rara avis* at that time, and in that part of the country especially.

There was but one more miner, for Soo Chin was but a machine, or at least was so deemed by his masters. And this was Dan Tipberghien, from county Clare; a wild, fiery, roaring, rattling Irishman, with a temper like gunpowder, but with his heart overflowing with “the milk of human kindness.”

One quick to anger, a lover of fisticuffs and “potheen,” but who would share his last crumb with, or fight for, a friend. He was deservedly a favorite, and needs no description—he was a great red-headed Irishman.

The way these six persons, so different in looks and characteristics, became associated, was as follows:

Donald had found his money was nearly gone, while in New York, and that he had barely sufficient to pay his passage by steamer to San Francisco. He would neither work for wages nor beg, so he determined to return to the mines.

On the passage out he had made the acquaintance of his now comrades, with the exception of Enoch Mozey, and learning they were bound upon the same quest as himself, an agreement was finally struck that they should stick together, although each was to work on his own hook.

Mylne piloted them to Fall River, a tributary of the Klamath in the northern portion of California. A couple of years before, Donald and a friend, Ives Wambold, had opened a claim there, and with a steady success, the two averaging

three ounces per day, of twenty-one dollars assay. They had by no means exhausted it, and when the five prospectors, accompanied by Soo Chin as cook, reached the spot, they found to their great satisfaction that no one had jumped the claim.

The picking was good, as the bed-rock was never more than ten feet below the surface, and they were making excellent averages, when one day they were disagreeably surprised by the sudden appearance of a stranger, who gave his name as Enoch Mozey, and who asked for a night's lodging.

Well, the *finale* was as might have been expected, and Mozey became one of their number. At first they would have avoided this, but after due deliberation, they knew that did they turn him away, he could soon return with more men, and as they could not prevent them from preempting a claim, their secret would thus ooze out, and the country be overrun by prospectors.

So they made the best of a bad bargain, and in time they all grew to like the dark, taciturn man, who could be wonderfully pleasant when he chose to exert himself, which, however, was but seldom.

After supper was over, Tim Jenkins arose, and taking his huge, broad-brimmed *sombrero*, was leaving the hut, when Donald said:

"Where now, Tim? remember, you promised to tell us your story to-night, old fellow. No shirking. We won't allow that."

"Deon't know shirk, I deon't. I'll be back d'rectly; 'm jest goin' tew make a deposit in my bank. Pay day, yeou know;" and he left the shanty, whistling a bar of "Lovena," his favorite song.

The other miners lighted their pipes, with the exception of Willie Herbert, who never smoked, and prepared to spend a cosy evening. As a general rule, singing, telling yarns, and a game or two was the programme. Not of cards or dice, however; these were interdicted, even as a harmless amusement, for they well knew that, once begun, it would end in gambling, thus breeding quarrels and dissension.

For they had no other way of spending their money, excepting when they went over to Shasta City for necessary provisions, such as flour, salt, coffee, tea, etc. On this duty they

took turns, two going at a time, the round trip being nearly two hundred miles.

As may be imagined, they were sparing of such commodities, which were eked out carefully; the mountains and plains around supplying plenty of meat and vegetables.

In a few minutes after his departure Jenkins returned, greatly excited, but seated himself without a word, filling his pipe and smoking furiously. A fierce scowl wrinkled his brow, and his great gray eyes glittered ominously in the glow of the fire.

At length Donald spoke, a little anxiously, for he knew the usually calm nature of Timothy, and that it must be something quite serious to ruffle it so greatly.

"Well, Tim, what's up now? Seen a ghost, eh?" he inquired.

"Mein Himmel, gabdain, vat vor you dalks like dat?" solemnly interrupted Jan. "Ofe you shbeak 'boud dem vellers vor vun, dey gids you vor shure."

"Dry up, Fatty, you're safe, anyhow. One look at you would scare the oldest spook living. Well, Tim?" queried Mylne.

"Thar wasn't a ghost on it left," slowly muttered Jenkins. "Heow much, on a rough guess, is ninety-seving ounces wuth, square?"

"Nearly two thousand dollars," replied Donald. "But why do you ask?"

"Then Dutchy's ghost is jest so much the richer, that's all. Boys," he added, in a fierce, hissing whisper that thrilled the nerves of all who heard him, "thar's a sneakin' thief 'mongst us. Every smitch of my dust, 'xcept what I dug this week, is gone. Stolen!"

The announcement fell like a thunderbolt in the midst of the little party. The glances slowly passed around the circle. Who was the thief? Surely not among themselves; and yet it must be so. No other person had been near the camp for weeks, to their knowledge.

And then, if one suffered, had the remainder escaped? Where one lot was stolen, would not the rest have vanished also? They dreaded to look, lest their worst fears be confirmed.

Donald Mylne glanced keenly and almost fiercely around into the faces of his comrades.

Jan Weber dropped the half-smoked pipe into his lap and stared stupidly around with his huge mouth widely extended, revealing a set of yellow snags that would not have disgraced an alligator, until the fiery mass that had fallen from his pipe-bowl burnt through his nether garment and scorched the tender fat ; then he ejaculated :

“ Mein Got in Himmel !” but whether at Tim’s misfortune or his own, we are not prepared to state.

Dan Tipberghien scratched his head furiously and whistled softly, “ St. Patrick’s Day in the Morning ;” Willie Herbert sat pale and silent ; while Enoch Mozey turned an ashen gray, and shifted his black, glittering eyes swiftly from one to another.

He spoke first, saying :

“ This is serious news, friends, and must be investigated. But first, I think each had better examine the place where he keeps his dust. Where one loses, the others can scarcely escape,” and he started toward the door.

“ Hold !” cried Donald. “ This must not be slurred over. We must proceed systematically if we hope to bring the deed home to the right one. Willie, lead the way to your *cache* first,” added he, kindly, clasping the cold, trembling hand of the youth in his own, pressing it reassuringly.

Their fears were confirmed, for the little cavity beneath the flat rock, where Herbert had concealed his gold, was empty, with the exception of the empty bag or purse of buckskin, now turned wrongside out, with the tiny gleaming particles still adhering to the leather. By the light of the torch the initials “ W. H.” upon it told why it had been left.

When the boy learned his loss he sunk down in despair, murmuring, “ Oh, my mother, my poor sister !” in tones of such bitter agony that Donald’s great heart swelled within him, and he hissed a bitter oath that fearful retribution should be meted out to the miscreant that had wrought such trouble among their heretofore happy band.

The result of each visit was the same until the round was completed, and they were returning gloomily enough to the camp, when Mozey stopped them, saying :

" Gentlemen, we have been robbed, I among the rest, but pardon me if I say that I was a little more prudent than the remainder. I am an old miner, and was cleaned out once before in the same way, of nearly three hundred ounces. I had found a nest of nuggets while prospecting, and concealed my gold, as I thought, in an unusually safe place.

" I put it in an oil-skin bag and buried it, by diving, at the bottom of the river. I had a stout wire connecting with it, running along under the sand to the shore, where the end of it was concealed under a heavy rock. As you may guess, I considered it safe there, and was careful only to visit it on a dark night, when I would add what I had collected since. Still I must have been watched, for I found one night that it had been stolen and not a trace left.

" It was a dear lesson, but I learned from it never to trust my whole store in one place. I have not now, and if you will follow me, I will show you my second 'bank,' as Mr. Jenkins calls it. I have about forty ounces there, and if it is safe, will be most happy to divide equally with you," and he led the way to the back of the camp.

Pausing by the side of a small sapling that was marked with a small cross, he unwound a long thin cord from where it was wrapped around his arm near the shoulder. This he fastened close to the cross, then with the other end in his hand, he walked three paces north and showed another bush marked with the same symbol.

The free end he secured as before, then gathering up the slack, he walked directly toward a dead snag, almost due east, paying out the string as he did so. When at the end of the cord he stooped and began removing the earth with his knife and hands. Then arising, he cried exultantly :

" See, comrades, we are not entirely dependent upon our last week's work, thanks to my precaution. I was afraid I would not be able to find the place in the night, as I have not been near it for over a month. But come, let's return to the shanty, and then we will weigh the dust and share alike."

Donald and Willie protested against this self-sacrifice, but Mozey would hear to no refusal. Weber and Tipberghien accepted their portion joyfully and with many thanks, but Donald noted with great surprise that although Tim Jenkins

accepted the dust proffered him, it was coldly, almost ungraciously, and without one word either way.

This set him to thinking, for it was not natural in the usually warm-hearted Yankee, and he wondered if he had been deceived in the man. This was a new phase in his character, or, at least, demeanor, and he could not understand it. Donald knew not what to think, and resolved to keep a good look-out on the ungainly New-Englander.

Soo Chin, the little Chinaman, although he but imperfectly understood English, and could speak it still less, learned enough from the conversation to tell that the miners had been robbed, and curled himself up in a corner, looking like a scared rat, fearful lest they should pour their anger upon his head.

And not without good foundation for misgiving, either, for no one can tell how the Chinese are treated at the mines, unless he has seen it with his own eyes. They are considered as lawful game, and when a man thinks any thing is to be gained by abusing one of them, he does not hesitate long. A Chinaman more or less is not missed there.

'Tis true, they are generally arrant rogues and thieves, but almost invariably in a small way. You can safely trust them with a hundred ounces, where if a dollar was at stake they would risk life in stealing it.

And these are the men they contemplate employing on a large scale over the Southern States. Well, if each one of them will not do more petty stealing each month than would hire a strong, able-bodied man, then their nature has changed most completely. Besides taking at least three of them to do a common man's day's work. But, *revenons à nos moutons*.

Donald's eye fell upon him, and striding forward he grasped the mite by his long "pigtail," lifting him upon his feet, roaring in a tone of feigned rage :

" You little toad you, what did you steal our gold for, eh ? "

" Oh, no, no steal-ee ! Soo Chin velly good man. Likey Mellica' man much-ee, o-oh, so much-ee ! You likey me, me likey you, velly big heap-ee. O-o-h, John, hurt-ee me, makey Soo Chin cly !" and the little cook kicked violently as Donald held him up from the floor by his ~~pigtail~~, ~~whirling him round with his other hand like a teetotum~~.

Then dropping him he sat down by the fire in sullen silence, smoking his pipe vehemently. The hut was gloomy enough that evening, and the silence was only broken now and then by the muttered maledictions of Dan, or an exclamation from Ian Weber.

" May the devil make the bid the thavin' *Caish* slapes an this night! The curse av a poore lone orphint rist an him whiver he goo's. May the *Soutth* sing him to slape, the son av that foore-legged thing that sits an her tail, an' barks at the moon!"

" What would you do with him, Dan, if you knew who he was?" asked Donald.

" Be the piper that played before Moses, I'd milt the goold an' make the spalpeen dhrink ivery drap, so I w'u'd. Thin I'd bather his blissid hid wid a bit av a stick antil he saw moor starrs than those in the sky beyant, an' finish up be makin' him swim oover the river wid a kipple o' jugs tied til his fate in' a big stone round his neck, so I w'u'd!" roared Tipberghien.

CHAPTER II.

A THIEF'S REWARD.

THE harmony that had so long pervaded the miners' camp was most effectually destroyed by the discovery that one of their number was a *thief*. Their confidence in each other was shaken, and it was shown in numberless little actions and deeds. Each one felt that the other suspected him of being the delinquent, or at least the innocent ones did; and thus, while being compelled to associate closely, by the nature of their work, all unnecessary conversation was avoided, and the situation fast growing unbearable.

Matters came to a crisis one evening, of a day that had been unusually disagreeable, and after supper was over Enoch Mozey declared his intention of leaving.

"Comrades," using a word that he seemed unusually fond of, "I have stood this kind of life just as long as I possibly

ean. I did not want to be the first one to speak of leaving, but I would not pass another such week as this last one, for all the gold in the country. If you raise no serious objections I shall start out prospecting for another claim in the morning,' and he resumed his smoking.

But a close observer would have seen that he was considerably agitated, by the quick uneven puffs, although his face afforded no index to his thoughts.

The miners did not answer for some time, but the quick glances ran around the circle; each waiting for the other to speak first. After a while Donald Mylne spoke, deliberately, as though he was carefully weighing each word before utterance.

"Mr. Mozey, of course you can do just as you please; no one will hinder you. We would have no just cause for so doing. But don't you think it would be more the act of an honest, upright man, were you to remain and see the thing fairly out?"

The man addressed arose to his feet, his face a livid gray, while his keen black eyes scintillated with suppressed anger, as he replied in a low, constrained voice:

"Please be a little more explicit, sir, or interpret the words you have just spoken. What am to understand? Is any doubt cast upon my integrity; does any person present suspect me of having sto— made way with the gold?"

"Really, sir," replied Donald, arising from his seat, and leaning one hand carelessly upon the table, "I do not see what there was in my words to cause you to flare up in that style. One would think I had accused you of stealing the money, instead of advising you only for your own good. What I meant was this:

"Should you leave as you propose, and the thief never be discovered, ten to one you would be suspected. And I tell you frankly that in such a case, I would be one of the first to think so," he added, firmly.

"And now sir, listen to me. If I should stay after what you have said, I should deserve to be suspected. Do your worst, for if I am alive, I leave this to-morrow. And be so kind as to bear in mind, young sir, that you will be called to account for those words of yours, when—" he hissed through his clenched teeth, when Donald interrupted him with:

"Now you're talking sense! When, where and how shall it be?"

"Pardon, sir Hotspur, if I decline the meeting just at present. Your friends are entirely too numerous, and although I might manage them one at a time, the four, when added to your excellency, might prove inconvenient. Fear not, I shall know where to find you," ironically replied Mozey.

"Bah! if I have to live until *you* meet me fairly, hand to hand, Methuselah might call himself my grandson!" and he resumed his seat, not heeding the look of fiendish hate shot after him from the snake-like eyes of Mozey.

"You are pleased to be facetious, my dear sir, but remember that those laugh best that laugh longest. And I bid you good-by now, as in all probability I shall be off before you are up in the morning."

"I shall not thank you for the hospitality of this shanty," he added, after a short pause, "as it belongs no more to you than the others. Besides, I believe I have always paid my share of the expenses," and wrapping himself up in his blanket he laid down with his feet to the fire.

Donald stared at him absently, but his thoughts wandered far away, for he suffered the half-smoked pipe to drop from his lips to the ground, where it still sent up a tiny column of blue smoke. He was ill at ease, and sorely puzzled what to do. Of late his suspicions had been divided between Jenkins and Mozey. They both had been acting in a strange manner; not that they appeared to be leagued together, far from it; but they did little work, and where one was, the other was not far distant.

It was not so much the loss of the gold that worried him, as that he couldn't bear being outwitted; and he was baffled at every point. Still he was morally certain that one of the two men was guilty, yet he could not tell which one, and had not been able to find a single clue.

After a while Donald followed the example set by his comrades, and soon nothing was heard save the calm, steady breathing of men who were wearied with a hard day's toil. The fire gradually died away, and only a few tiny coals glimmered faintly through their thick, ashen coat, as the hours passed on.

But there appears to be one who rests uneasily. Perhaps his couch is too cold or hard for comfort. For he does not sleep in his bunk, but upon the bare ground-floor. It is the miner, Enoch Mozey.

He cautiously raises his head and glances keenly around. The room is dark, and he can not distinguish their features. But he can hear their steady breathing, and knows they are sleeping. A waking man can not counterfeit so steadily and regular.

He sits erect, then cautiously rising, he secures his rifle—the side-arms he had concealed within his bosom before lying down—and noiselessly passes from the hut into the open air.

He does not pause, but hastens rapidly from the place as though he did not feel safe while within sight of it. The night is dark and cloudy, but he does not heed this, and strides rapidly ahead.

Far better for him had he been a little more cautious in leaving the shanty, for no sooner had he closed the door behind him than the long, gaunt form of Tim the Yankee, slid from his bunk, and he too was fully dressed, save with a pair of moccasins on instead of boots.

Peeping through the doorway, he waited until the miner was half hidden in the gloom, then stepped out, and crouching low down, Tim glided swiftly after Mozey.

The latter, apparently, did not dread discovery, for he glanced behind him but once, and then his pursuer's form was blinded with the foliage of a scrubby cedar. Mozey walked rapidly along for over a mile before pausing, and Jenkins began to fear he had wronged him—that he was really going on to Shasta City as he had stated.

But then he suddenly paused, and bending his ear to the ground listened intently for a full minute, but his suspicions, if indeed he entertained any, were lulled, and taking a dark lantern from his pocket, opened the slide.

Tim's eyes glistened, and his fingers began to twitch as he saw this, and drawing a revolver from his belt, he rapidly cocked it. The click, though faint, was heard by Mozey, and quick as thought he closed the lid, and then listened keenly in painful suspense.

The Yankee uttered a faint squeak, followed by a slight rustle in the grass and dead leaves. The bait took, Mozey reopened the slide with a relieved laugh, muttering :

" Bah ! frightened at a rabbit. Really one would think there was some foundation for that cursed Scotchman's slur at my courage. But it's the fault of that infernal gold. I never stole any thing before ; that is only in the way of gambling, and that is strictly honorable, especially when you manipulate loaded dice, and marked cards. That is not called stealing, but where is the difference ?" and his voice died down to a low murmur until the spy could not distinguish the words.

But he heard enough to feel assured that his suspicions were correct. That the man who had robbed his comrades when treated as a trusted friend, was before him, bent on securing the ill-gotten gold, and escaping beyond the possibility of capture before day dawned.

So he was not greatly surprised when Enoch Mozey set down the bull's-eye lantern where it would cast its full rays upon a good-sized flat stone half buried in the earth, and removed the *débris* from the surface of the rock. Then the robber began loosening the dirt with his knife, scraping it out with his hands.

Tim Jenkins cautiously crawled nearer, removing every twig from his path. He reached a point within ten feet of the kneeling robber, who had by this time excavated a hole nearly two feet deep.

The tall, gaunt Yankee craned his long neck forward, peering eagerly over the shoulder of the ex-miner, who had finally reached the gold. This was secured in six long, narrow bags of deer-skin, carefully tied up and wrapped in leaves. As Mozey lifted one of these cylinders in either hand, he started and turned his head, looking full into the Yankee's face. His keen ear caught the sound of suppressed breathing, and starting, his worst fears were realized.

He half-way arose, but Tim was too quick for him, and, with a wild sereech that would have done honor to a Blackfoot, he sprung into the air, and striking out with his huge feet, he delivered a powerful blow full upon the robber's shoulders, driving his head down into the hole so violently that the blood poured in streams from his mouth and nos-

trills, and for a few moments Jenkins feared he had killed him.

But he soon saw that he was only stunned, and, after binding his captive's hands firmly behind him with strips torn from the thief's hunting-shirt, Tim secured the precious sacks of dust to the belt at his own waist. Then, lighting his pipe, he sat down and contentedly awaited the revival of the ex-miner.

Ever and anon he would remove the pipe from his mouth to emit a quiet chuckle of delight at his success in circumventing the would-be acute thief, and thought of the joyful surprise that awaited his comrades when he should march into the tent leading the thief and exhibiting the gold they had given up as lost.

The time passed rapidly enough to Tim, but it was over half an hour before Mozey was able to sit up, he had received so violent a shock. Then he stared around him with a bewildered air, and muttered, as if to himself:

"Where am I? What's happened?"

"Git eout, ye double an' twisted sneak-thief yeou. Try and play 'bused innocence on me, will yeou? Reckon yeou don't know nothin' 't all 'beout this 'ere stolen rhino, nor nothin', don't ye? Guess yeou thought I was green, didn't yeou, ye pison sarpint—sa-a-y?" roared Timothy.

"Stolen gold—what do you mean?" demanded Mozey, seeing at a glance what had befallen him, and resolved to brazen it out until he learned the real state of things against him; how much Jenkins had actually discovered. "If you mean the dust yonder, that is honestly mine. But perhaps you mean to rob me of it?"

"Jee-rusalem crickity, jes' listen! Stealin' from a thief; no, thank yeou, 'tain't my style," began Timothy, laughing, when he was interrupted by Mozey.

"Then what do you mean?—why have you bound my hands?" he asked, anxiously.

"Wal, yeou see I was fast awake when you left the palace yonder, and as I knowed you'd kinder forgot somethin'—"

"No I didn't, for I thought of every thing before I lay down to sleep," said Enoch.

"I won't tell yeou ye lie, mister, bein' as yeou're tied up."

leetle, but I rayther guess yeou didn't gin the fellers a lock o' yeour h'ar afore yeou left. Now thet wa'n't jest right, seein' heow much they likes yeou, 'specially the square. So I tuk the liberty o' comin' arter yeou, tew invite yeou back ag'in, and I kinder think yeou'd better go, don't yeou?" added Tim, placing his pipe in his pocket and stooping to set the robber on his feet.

Enoch Mozey was not a man to tamely submit while there was a ghost of a chance for escape, and jerking his feet up, he shot them full in the stomach of the unsuspecting Yankee, who *sat down* upon the ground with a jar and a grunt which sounded most melodiously in the ears of his assailant.

Then, with an elastic spring that spoke well for his gymnastics, the thief alighted fairly upon his feet, and then darted away at the top of his speed. But Jenkins quickly rallied, and with a hoarse yell of rage bounded after the ex-miner, his long legs carrying him over the rocks and bushes with a speed that was truly surprising.

The fugitive knew that in a fair race he would soon be overhauled, and as he leaped over a scrubby bush, he crouched close to its root. Tim was hard behind, and seeing the robber take the leap, followed without hesitation. As he touched the ground, Mozey thrust his feet between Tim's legs and tripped him up, the Yankee falling with violence.

Then Enoch arose and leaped forward, intending to alight on the stomach of his foe, and thus place him *hors du combat*. But Jenkins was "up to trap," and saw the maneuver in time to roll swiftly to one side, while he dexterously caught the other by one foot, thus tripping him up, and before Mozey could arise, Tim had fastened a strong grip upon the thief's throat.

"Yeou air a dod-blamed cute feller, mister man, but 'twon't do. So yeou mought jist as well come along fust as last. It's got tew be did. Gosh all hemlock, yaas!" said the Yankee.

Enoch Mozey saw that the game was up, for the present, at least, and resigning himself to fate, he obeyed the impulse given by Tim, who drove him to where the treasure had been unearthed, where he secured his pistol and the lantern. After seeing that the gold was safe at his belt, Jenkins led his captive back over the trail they had come, and soon neared the **hut**.

The door was wide open, and from the loud, excited tones of the miners, they knew that the double disappearance had been discovered, and it was plain that they were considered as being in league, and probably were now far away with the stolen gold. Then Tim uttered a wild, eldritch screech, that could have been heard, goodness knows how far, in his peculiar voice, that, once heard, would never be mistaken for aught else.

The occupants of the hut rushed to the door in surprise, for they recognized the cry, and knew not what to make of it. Then Tim turned the glow of light from the lantern upon Mozey's face, so they could see he was a prisoner, and came running to meet them.

But Tim would answer no questions until he had entered the cabin and firmly tied the captive's feet. Then he explained the way in which he had captured the thief, and secured the gold that had been stolen from them.

"You lie, curse you! It's my dust, honestly come by, and this is a villainous plot to rob me of my hard earnings," foamed Mozey, his eyes gleaming like twin coals with rage, as he strove to burst the bonds asunder.

"That is easily decided," said Donald Mylne, "for if it is our gold, you will find in my portion of it a queer nugget, shaped like a heart, with an arrow through it. To show you we mean fairly, I will pour it out before your own eyes, and you can see for yourself."

This was done, and in the third bag emptied, the described lump was found, thus dispelling any doubt about its being the stolen treasure. Then Tim was asked how he had known who had stolen the dust.

"Wal, I didn't know for sartin, but there was one or tew things thet made me kinder 'spicion *he* was the thief. Fust, he tuck it tew darned cool like, jest 's if he'd bin 'xpecting it. Then I didn't like his roundabout yarn o' heow he'd bin robbed afore; but what clinched it all, and made me putty nigh sartin I was on the right track, was this:

"Yeou may 'member when he was a-measurin' off the distance tew whar he'd hid the dust that he divided arterwards, ~~he said~~ he hadn't bin thar for over a month. Neow I would 'a' swored he lied like all git eout, for as I stood by one o'

them bushes, I put my hand right onter whar he'd cut the cross, and the *sap was still a-runnin' fresh.*

"Neow, ef he hedn't bin thar inside o' a week, and marked that bush, it would 'a' kinder healed over like. And t'other was in the same fix. So I tried tew think what 'ud make him lie that a-way for, when it flashed across me that *he was the thief.* But I couldn't prove it, so I lay low an' kep' track o' him whariver he went. Then tew-night when he picked the fuss onter yew, I knowed what was up, an' when he slid out o' the shanty, I follered an' nabbed him, jest as he thought he was all hunky," concluded Timothy.

"Tim, old fellow, give me your hand and forgive me the wrong I have done you. I can now see what a blind fool I was, but I really did think you knew more about the missing gold than you cared to tell. Why didn't you tell me your suspicions?" cried Donald, grasping the huge, bony hand of the Yankee.

"I knowed yeou did, square, I knowed it, but never mind neow, it's all right at last. But then, ef I'd 'a' told yeou what I thought, and it had turned out I was wrong, don't yeou see yeou would 'a' bin shore I was the thief, an' tryin' tew throw the blame off ontew another man's shoulders?" replied Jenkins.

"That's so; I didn't think of that," said Donald. "But now the next question is, what shall we do with the thief? If it wouldn't take so much time, I should vote for handing him over to Judge Lynch. As it is, we must deal with him ourselves."

"What dew yeou say tew a raal good quilltin' with a hickory sprout?" suggested Timothy, thoughtfully.

"*Melia murther!*" cried Tipberghien, "av yez ask me, I say, brand the dirty *omudthaun* wid the litter *tay*, as they do in the ould dart for st'alin'."

"Prick his bibs!" quoth Jan Weber, as though he deemed this to be the most awful punishment that ingenuity could devise.

"Why not let him go free?" pleaded Willie Herbert, coming forward. "We have got back the gold now, and that is all we want. Give him his share, and let him go. His conscience will be his punishment and I can sue he will never

commit another such an act. Am I not right, Mr. Mozey?" he asked, turning to the prisoner.

"Thank you, Willie, but you might as well hope to whistle down the wind, as to try to make *them* act like men. It is against their nature. They want to rob me of my gold, and will do it in spite of all you may say," hissed the robber.

Dan Tipberghien's plan of punishment was finally resolved upon by all but Herbert, who declared he would have nothing whatever to do with it, and left the shanty, after pleading in vain for a commutation of the sentence. But the miners were vindictive. The crime of which he had been guilty was considered more heinous, if possible, than murder, all over the country, and they shared the public opinion.

Finally Jenkins cut out a letter T from a piece of sheet-iron, and then riveted a handle to it, of wire. Then four strips of paper were placed in a hat, one of them being marked with a black cross, the others blank. Jan Weber was blindfolded, and drawing them one at a time, handed them around, reserving the last for himself.

The marked lot had fallen to Dan Tipberghien. He was the one to apply the brand.

At first Enoch Mozey could not believe they were in earnest, and scoffed at them. But when he saw how coldly and methodically they set about the preliminaries, an icy chill ran over his form.

He cursed and foamed, uttering wild threats as to what he would do when once he was free, but they heeded him not. Then he begged and pleaded for mercy, offering to do any thing, to be their slave, if they would only substitute some other punishment. But they replied not a word, and Dan thrust the letter into a glowing mass of coals, then began rolling up his sleeves.

"Listen to me, Donald Mylne, and you, men, and mark well what I say. You had better kill me at once, and be done with it; for as sure as you touch me with that brand, I swear never to rest until I have the heart's blood of every one of ye! Just as sure as the sun sets to-morrow, just so certain will each one of you die a dog's death!" gritted Mozey, with a hoarse growl.

"Arrah, be aisy now, ye devil's whelp," roared Dan. "Sure

an' I only wants to mark yez so't yer masther'll know yes whin he mates ye," and he drew the glowing iron from the fire and approached the thief.

Enoch Mozey never flinched as he felt the heat of the letter before his face, and only muttered :

" Better kill me, I say—better kill me at once!"

Then the brand touched his forehead with a sickening, horrible *hiss*, and the miners turned their heads away from the dreadful sight with a shudder.

Dan Tipberghien dropped the brand and staggered back, overcome by the fearful sound and effluvium, but the victim uttered not a word or stirred a muscle. His features were not distorted, but his eyes!—there was a wild, fiendish glow in their depths that could not be described as they roved from one to another of his judges, as if he would devour them with his glances.

They well knew what that glare meant. That they were *marked men*; marked for the death they had denied the branded thief. And they felt in their hearts that it would have been better for them had they granted his request, but no one said so openly.

A quantity of provisions was packed up, and the prisoner's share of the gold placed with it, but his weapons were retained. Then his bonds were severed, and he rose to his feet.

The miners were prepared for a burst of fury on his part, but they did not know their man. He carelessly advanced and secured the gold in a belt around his body, beneath his clothes. Then slinging the provisions over his shoulder, he strode to the door of the cabin. Here he paused and whispered in a low, constrained voice, unlike any thing they had ever heard before :

" My kind friends and comrades, I bid you good-by. Rest assured, I shall not soon forget this little attention," touching the seared spot on his forehead with the tip of his fore-finger, " and the time may come when I will be able to return the compliment. Do not be alarmed. You have not yet heard the last of THE LETTER T. When you see it again, please remember your very humble and thankful comrade, Enoch Mozey. *Adios, amigos!*" and with a low, quiet laugh he strode

rapidly away in the first golden rays of the rising sun, without once turning his head to glance back at those who had once been his comrades, but who were now his deadliest enemies.

The miners did not speak, but after eating a hearty breakfast they proceeded to their work in the mine. Each man took his knife and revolver along with him.

CHAPTER III.

TIM AND THE SCHOOLMA'AM.

A WEEK had passed away since the dreadful punishment meted out to the thief, Enoch Mozey, and during this time nothing had been seen or heard of him, by his old comrades, the miners on Fall River. They had divided the nights into five watches, each man taking his turn, for they knew how sincere the ex-miner was when he told them they had not heard the last of the letter T, and knew that did he once procure a horse, and arms, a desperate attempt would be made for revenge. Still they hoped by being vigilant and watchful, to discover him before any harm was done.

They had dispatched a hearty supper, and gathered around the huge fireplace, for although very warm during the day, the nights were almost invariably chilly, and the glowing heat of the crackling logs was very pleasant.

For a time they sat in silence, the mind of each brooding over the act they had performed a few short days before, and its possible consequences. Then Donald exclaimed :

" Well, we are a nice set for a Quaker meeting, to be sure. Tell us that story, Tim—the one you promised us some time ago. About what made you come out West, you know."

" Yeour most obejient, gentlemen and feller-citerzens," replied Tim, with a most elaborate bow. " But fust, afore I begin yeou must all promise me, solumnly, never tew make fun o' this 'ere heart hist'ry, nor tew ever turn it inter ridicule, 'case my feelin's is still very sensitive an' sore upon thet peint," soberly uttered Timothy.

"We promise. Go on with your story," was the unanimous reply.

"Tew begin at the beginnin', I used tew live when tew hum down tew Hipsville, nigh Danbury in Connecticut. Time I's 'beout twenty year old, a new teacher come tew teach school in our deestrict, an' I soon found eout she was a allfired han'-some gal, named Maggie Franklin.

"It was airly spring, an' soon as I caught sight o' Maggie, I made up my mind tew go tew school thet tarm less bu'st a button. And so I did, though dad got awful hot about it, an' even threatened tew tan my hide fer me with the ile o' hick'ry. But I was a leetle tew old for that, an' so I guess he concluded, fer arter that he didn't say nothin' more ag'in' my 'tendin'.

"Yeou see I hed a purty good edication a'ready, and on'y went so 's I could git tew see the schoolmarm oftener, an' sometimes see her hum arter hours. Mighty leetle I studied the lessins neow I tell ye, fer try as hard as I would, my eyes *would* travel right smack over tew her desk, an' thar I'd stare an' stare, my mouth a-gawpin' wide opin till she'd look to'rds me.

"Lawsy gracious tew goodness, heow I would blush then, an' droppin' my eyes, I'd pertend tew be a-studyin' like all git eout. Then I'd peek over the aidge of the book and 'f she wasn't a-lookin', I'd be jest as happy as a pig in a tatur-patch.

"Neow, boys, yeou may think I'm foolish an' laugh jest as much as yeou darn please! I was head over years in love with Maggie, and I deon't keer who knows it. It's the fust an' last time I ever was in love, but that was a sockdolloger, neow I tell yeou!

"She was purty as a pictur', an' 'f yeou fellers 'd bin lucky enough tew hev seen her, yeou'd say so tew. She was small an' kinder plump like, but jest as limber an' springy as a yearlin' doe. Her cheeks was jest the color of a spring bewty, only not quite so streaky; with lips like a ripe tomater cut in two aidgeways. Then her eyes an' hair, so black an' curly—the hair I mean—her great big eyes, kinder soft an' dreamy like, jest 's if she's goin' tew cry.

"But they could shine an' sparkle tew, fer I went tew kiss her once. Oh Lordy, the fire e'na'most flew from them, and her han', so little an' dainty, like a big snow-flake, tuck me

kersplat 'long side the chops. I swow, it made my years achofer a nour a'most.

"I sca'cly know how it happened, but I raaly thought her lips was tew ripe strawb'ries, and that I was a woodpecker, so awful hungry! But I didn't pick 'em. 'Cause why, she wouldn't let me git cluss enough.

"Arter this she was offish fer a spell an' wouldn't notice me a mite, till one day I couldn't stand it no longer, an' I up afore the whole school and begged her pardon. Boys, I tell yeou I never felt so 'tarnal sheepish in all my horned days, as I did when Maggie tuck holt o' my hand an' shuck it so kind an' lovin' like, tellin' me tew let the matter drop an' forgit all abeout it.

"I tried mighty hard tew keep it in, but at last I bu'sted right eout in a boo-hoo! and cried like a big calf. I couldn't help it an' that's all abeout it. I could 'a' laid right down at her feet then an' died, jest as happy as a bumblebee in a clover patch! She did look so sweet an' purty; I can e'ena'most see her face neow," and Timothy dropped his pipe, and sat staring into the cheerful fire.

He was not interrupted; his comrades saw that his heart was moved with the memories of by-gone days, and they were touched with his simple, earnest words.

"Wal," he resumed, with a sigh, "that is all past and gone neow, an' I haven't finished my story yit. Neow yeou mustn't think that I am the only one who was in love with the schoolmarm. No, thar was lots o' other chaps, but somehow I didn't feel afeerd of any 'cept John Campbell. He was a rich young feller, an' as han'some fer a man as she was fer a gal, an' thought heaps of Maggie. They was together so often that at last I got raaly scart and made up my mind tew pop tew the schoolmarm the fust chaince I got, when we was alone.

"Wal, it come, one Sat'day arternoon, as I was eout huntin'. I met her face tew face on the hill that overlooks the swamp, back a little ways from Hipsville. I spoke tew her, an' then we walked slowly along the ridge tell we got tew the lone ellum tree that stood jest on the aidge of the bank.

"Thar was a good place tew set here, and I asked her tew stop fer awhile as I hed somethin' tew tell her. She looked at me fer a moment, her big black eyes a-dancin' and a-shinin'.

like a lightnin'-bug in the night-time, then they growed kind o' soft like an' drapped tew the ground.

"She knowed what was comin' jest as well's I did, as I could plainly see, but that didn't make the words any easier tew speak. Then she said, arter waitin' fer me tew speak fer a little while:

"'Wal, Mister Jinkins, I'm waitin' very patiently tew hear yeour secret. What is it?" and she looked at me kinder teazin' like.

"And then I spunked up an' told her my love. I cain't jestly remember the words I used, or what I said. But that don't matter. P'r'aps some o' you fellers has bin through the mill; ef so yeou kin tell t'others.

"As I told yeou I deon't know what I said, for jest then, afore she could answer, a puff o' wind come along an' carried Maggie's straw flat from her lap, over the bank, whar it hung onter a small bush that growed in the aidge of the swamp. We both jumped up an' the schoolmarm she hollered:

"'Oh, Mister Jinkins, git my hat, please!'

"I looked over the bank. It was abeout fifteen feet high, right straight deown. Thar wasn't no rock, but all soft dirt. I knowed the bank was purty nigh the same hight fer a mile either way, and that on the walk back I'd find severial rayther soft places, tew say the least. Maggie she knowed that tew.

"'Caint yeou git down here, Timothy?'

"I felt jest as though I could jump over the moon then, tew hear her say 'Timothy' ag'in in her clear, bird-like voice, so sweet an' soft like. So I sais, sais I:

"'Yas. I kin jump,' an' so I did, 'thout waitin' fer her tew answer.

"Yas, I jumped, an' I can tell yeou, boys, I lit mighty soft. I wasn't jarred a bit, but went down kersplunk! like a big bullfrog in a mud-puddle. The spot whar I lit was jist as soft as mush, but was kivered with a coat o' thin grass, so it looked like solid airth.

"Down I went with a splash, cl'ar up tew my armpits, the mud sloshin' all over, fillin' my ears and mouth plump full. I hearn Maggie gin a little squeak, and then a clear, ringin' laugh that made me tingle all over. She tried her best tew stop it by puttin' her plump leetle hand over her rosy mouth,

but it was no go. I hearn it an' it made me madder'n a ho'-net. I thought she made me jump jest tew git a laugh at me.

"And a good one she did hev, tew! No wonder; I raaly b'lieve 'twould 'a' made a dead pusson laugh tew see me then, only head an' arms a-stickin' outen the ground, jest like a over-grown mushroom or toad-stool; a-clawin' the mud outen my eyes an' a-spittin' like all git eout!

"Master Jinkins, air yeou hurt? cain't yeou git eout?" said Maggie.

"No!" said I, short as pie-crust.

"Oh, I'm *so* sorry. Wait an' I'll go git help," an' off she put to'rds town.

"Wal, I *did* wait, as you can guess, but not fer long, and then help come an' I was pulled eout, leavin' my boots behind me in the mud. I didn't stop tew say thankee, or talk about it, but run hum, jest about the quickest. When I got clean ag'in, I vowed never tew speak tew the schoolmarm, but that same night a leetle boy handed me a note from her, askin' me tew call that evenin'. I swore I'd dew nothin' of the sort, an' all the time I kep' riggin' up tew go. Go I did, and at last I made eout tew repeat the question I'd asked afore.

"Well, comrades mine, I suppose you expect to learn that the 'school-marm,' rejected me, 'declined with thanks,' but such was not the case. She told me she had loved and respected me from the first, despite my unfortunate looks and actions. Yes, she, my Maggie, accepted me, and I was supremely happy. Alas, such joy as mine was tew great tew be long-lived!

"We were to be married on New Year's day, and the time drew near. But before Christmas my darling was in her grave! A sudden attack of typhus fever carred her off. She was ill only one short week, and then she whom I loved so well, my Maggie—my more then life—died, and I followed her to her last resting-place.

"Comrades, I can not help it. Even now I feel as if my heart would break, whenever I think of her, my lost love!" and he bowed his head upon his hands while the scalding tears trickled through his fingers.

No one spoke. All were silent until Timothy raised his head with a faint smile and said:

"And now my friends, you know my story. I left home

as soon as possible. I could not bear to live there where every tree and bush spoke of Maggie. But every New Year's day is spent by her grave. That is all that keeps me alive. No doubt you wonder at my talking as I do, for you are used to the uncouth language and nasal twang of 'Tim the Yankee.' That was only a mask put on from caprice. Tonight you see it lifted for the first time, and the last time.

"And now, dear friends, for such you are to me, I trust from the depths of my heart that you may never experience the sorrow and despair that I have. I often wonder at myself that I can still live, and wear, even outwardly, an appearance of gayety."

So saying, he arose from his seat, and opening the door of the hut, leaned against the post as he glanced up at the sky where the full moon was sailing along, undimmed by a single cloud. Donald arose, and approaching him, placed one hand affectionately upon Tim's shoulder, when a clear report was heard, and with a feeble moan the tall form of the Yankee staggered back and fell into the arms of the young miner.

No need to ask what was the matter. The small hole surrounded by a discolored circle upon the high forehead, told but too plainly that the bullet sped by the concealed marksman had been aimed but too truly.

Donald placed his hand over the miner's heart. There was no pulsation ; it had ceased to beat. Then drawing his revolver, he called his comrades to follow him, and dashed toward the low line of bushes from whence the shot must have been discharged.

A dark form leaped up and straightened its arm ; then came a flash and hiss of a revolver-bullet. But quick as was the action, Donald frustrated it by throwing himself upon his face so that the missile passed harmlessly over his head.

Then he sprung forward again and fired twice, just as the assassin darted into the wood. A half-stifled curse told that one at least of his shots had taken effect, but still the fugitive darted on. The four miners pressed forward in hot pursuit, but from the time they entered the wood nothing was seen or heard of the murderer, and after an hour's fruitless search, they abandoned the chase as hopeless and slowly returned to the hut, carefully examining every bush and shrub that would

be likely to afford a covert for the fugitive. But all was in vain. They could do nothing until daylight, when they determined to take the trail and follow it until they unearthed the murderer of their loved comrade, or else all hope was lost.

They started back in horror as they entered the doorway. The body of the Yankee had been dragged close to the fire, and on the forehead, as well as both of the cheeks, was the deep brand of *the letter T*.

No need to ask now who had done the deed—who was the murderer. The lips of each syllabled the same name; of Enoch Mozey. His parting words of "You have not yet heard the last of the letter T," flashed across their minds, and they felt that he had struck his first blow for revenge. When would the next one fall, and upon whom?

Soo Chin, the little Chinaman, was lying in one corner, where he had been felled apparently by a blow from a pistol-butt, and now arose, answering Donald's questions with a confused jabbering, from which he managed to extract the following:

A few minutes after the miners had darted out to avenge the death of their comrade, Soo Chin had seen a face peering in at the window, and recognized it as belonging to Enoch Mozey, the branded thief. Then the murderer came around to the door, and on Soo Chin trying to escape, he was knocked down, but not senseless, as his assailant supposed.

He lay motionless, however, and saw Mozey place an iron instrument into the fire, then drag the corpse of the murdered man close to the hearth. Then he applied the brand with a wild, horrible laugh of vindictive joy. On hearing the voices of the returning miners as they beat about in the bushes, he slipped through the window, and then Soo Chin heard the faint tramp of a horse's hoofs as he fled in an opposite direction to that in which they were approaching.

Donald cursed his stupidity in being so easily baffled, and said:

"Comrades, you all hear what Chin says. That it was Mozey who first killed poor Tim, and then disfigured him in that fiendish manner. And you know what he threatened when he left us after being branded. That we had not heard

the last of the letter T yet, and when we saw it again to remember him. Well, we have seen it, and I, for one, will not forget till my dying day," and he cast a glance of mingled grief and affection toward the dead body, now lying upon the table covered with a cloth.

Then he resumed, more firmly, and with a decisive ring to his tones :

"There is but one thing for us to do. We must quit work and hunt the assassin down. For while he lives there is not one of us who is safe. We might be murdered at any moment, for we have already seen that he is determined to do any thing for revenge. What shall it be? Will you remain here at work, not knowing at what moment a bullet will be sent through you, or when in the dark have your nerves twitching constantly from thinking that a knife is being aimed at your heart by the hand of a midnight assassin? Will you do this, I ask, or will you take the trail with me at daylight, and swear to avenge our comrade's death upon his cowardly murderer? Tell me, men, which will you do?" exclaimed Donald, his gray eyes flashing as he glanced around him and awaited the reply of his comrades.

"Mr. Mylne, I think as you do; that there is no safety for any one of us as long as Mozey is at large, and wherever you lead I will follow," said Willie Herbert, coming forward and clasping the extended hand of Donald, who expressed his pleasure by a gratified look and warm pressure of the hand.

"*Baithershin, thin!*" roared Dan Tipberghien, thrusting forward a freckled, hairy hand nearly the size of a leg of mutton. "Devil skin me av I let the gossoon say that the likes o' me w'u'dn't stand up til a fri'nd."

"Yaw, me dinks so nyder," quoth Jan Weber, between two puffs of his pipe.

"Well, then, that is settled," replied Donald. "And as we must start at early dawn, the sooner we get to work the better. Poor Tim must be buried the first thing. Dan, you and Weber start a grave under the blasted cedar, the large one I mean, near the spring. Jenkins was always fond of the place, poor fellow," with a sigh. "And we will try and knock up a coffin."

The miners set to work in good earnest, for they would

needed every moment before dawn to prepare for their self-imposed task. With the tools required for the repairing of their "cradles," or "rockers," when they were broken, and an ax, Donald managed to put together a rough box that would answer the purpose. Then he and Willie went down to the temporary stable where they kept their horses, and leading them forth, picketed them out where they would have a free range on the short thick grass.

After examining saddles, bridles, and other equipage, Donald took his rifle and started out on a scout through the woods in their immediate vicinity, for he did not know but that Mozey had concealed himself with the hope of securing another shot for revenge, and if such was in reality the case, the young miner knew that he would have an excellent opportunity while they were burying their dead.

But he saw or heard nothing suspicious, and he concluded that his fears were without foundation, and that Enoch Mozey had in reality fled, satisfied for the time being with the blood of one of those who had sat in judgment over him for stealing the gold.

The corpse was reverently lowered into the pit prepared for its occupancy, and then the miners stood with uncovered heads, bowing mournfully as Donald Mylne read in a clear, but solemn tone, a chapter from the deceased miner's Bible, by the flickering light of a pine-knot held in the trembling hands of Soo Chin.

Then the grave was filled in and smoothed over, when the mourners knelt down upon the damp earth and offered up a mute prayer for the repose of the soul of him whose body was buried beneath them.

It was a wild, weird picture. The dark figures of the four miners kneeling around the narrow mound, their heads bowed upon their hands, but illy revealed by the torch upheld by the queer, elfish-looking Chinaman. The turbulent river flowing in the foreground, the gloomy forest in the rear, while on a little knoll at the left stood the shanty, the glow of the fire shining through the open door.

Soo Chin was directed to prepare a hearty meal, with plenty of coffee, while the miners drew the charges in their fire-arms, not caring to discharge them lest other ears than

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Soo Chin was directed to prepare a hearty meal, with plenty of coffee, while the miners drew the charges in their fire-arms, not caring to discharge them lest other ears than

their own should hear the reports; and carefully wiped and oiled them. Their saddle-bags were filled with cold meat and bread, and their canteens with coffee. Soo Chin placed the smoking victuals upon the table and the quartette sat down, forcing themselves to eat a hearty meal, for they knew not what toil and hardships they might have to undergo before they had another.

When day began to dawn the horses were mounted, and after telling the Chinaman to remain where he was until their return, they sought and soon found the trail of the assassin, left by his horse as he fled after branding the dead man with the letter T.

CHAPTER IV.

DONALD'S ADVENTURES.

THE miners followed rapidly on the murderer's trail, but as they were not very expert in the art, it was little wonder that they gradually lost instead of gaining distance, especially as the ground was in places very dry and rocky. Still they were none the less mortified when they could no longer help noticing this fact. It was very annoying to have to acknowledge they were beaten, particularly so to Donald.

Their only hope now was that Enoch Mozey had hastened to some place of refuge, where he would hope to remain concealed until after the first fury of pursuit was past. In this case there was a chance of their unearthing him, if they trailed him persistently, and once in view, Donald had little fear for the rest. He knew the horse he rode, and that there were few in the country that could equal him for speed or bottom.

Mylne explained this to his comrades, and they replied that what he willed they would obey. Their trust highly gratified him, and he led the way with increased ardor.

With an hour's rest at noon, to refresh their horses and eat a cold lunch themselves, they pressed on until late in the afternoon. The course of the fugitive led toward the Sierra

Nevada range, greatly to the surprise of the miners, who well knew that there was nothing but red-skins, or what was worse, "Road Agents," to be found among the recesses of that point for which the fugitive was apparently aiming.

This complicated matters considerably, and Donald feared that a big piece of work was being cut out for his little band. Still he did not despair, and he determined that, should their surmises prove correct, every ounce of their gold should be spent but what they would avenge their comrade's death. They knew that, for pay, any number of men could be secured who would gladly leave mining for the more exciting sport of *man-hunting*—and this was what they purposed to do were they baffled now.

A large hill, that might almost be called a mountain, loomed up before them, at less than a mile distance, and the trail led directly to its base. Donald drew rein, and his comrades followed his example, looking at their young leader inquiringly, as if asking what was to be done next.

"Mein himmel, gabdain, musd ve glimb ofer dat moun-dain? I vos break mein neck, vor shure, den, ofe I did," exclaimed Jan.

"Arrah, thin, ye fat porpus, but yez must be like the snap-pin' turkle, for devil a nick can I see, at all, at all," muttered Dan, sarcastically.

"I don't intend you shall have the chance, Jan. I will try and follow the trail over, on foot, while you three ride around the hill, and see if you can find the place where he strikes the prairie again. If you do find it, mark it, and then come back here, and wait for me. If I ain't here by dark, take my horse and go back to the shanty; then start for the mines, get a party of men, hunt out the thief who killed Jenkins, and serve him the same way. Will you do this?"

"But why shall we not hunt you up if you fail to come?" asked Willie.

"Because, if I am not here I shall be either killed or captured, and in either case, you three could do no good alone. If you hear more than one shot, then retreat; if only one, then wait for me here. If I don't come, then do as I have said."

They promised, although wonderingly, and dismounting,

Donald led his horse into a dense thicket, composed mainly of the choke-cherry and the service-berry, where he secured him, and placed a quantity of the tender tips of the trees within his reach. Then returning, he carefully covered the trail of both himself and horse, walking backward to do so effectually.

Then they parted, the three horsemen skirting the base and Donald following the trail up the steep hillside. He slung his rifle over his shoulder by the strap attached, and with revolver in his hand at half cock, a thumb upon the hammer and finger touching the trigger ready for an instantaneous shot, he proceeded.

He could tell that the fugitive had dismounted, so as to relieve the horse and ascend with more ease. He advanced slowly, screening himself as much as possible behind the rocks and bushes with which the hillside was covered; keenly scrutinizing every covert as he advanced, lest the murderer might be concealed in some of them.

This was a work of time, and Donald saw that he would not have many spare minutes, as he drew near the extreme summit. So far he had discovered nothing except that the trail he was following led directly toward the crest of the hill, without any perceptible break or pause.

He was wondering what were the ex-miner's reasons for crossing this difficult piece of ground, when he could easily have skirted it, when all at once he heard the faint sound of firing, mingled with whoops and yells, apparently coming from the level ground beyond the hill. He knew what it meant, but too well. His comrades had either been ambushed, or had fallen in with some foe—perhaps the man they were searching for, Enoch Mozey.

He uttered an exclamation and bounded upward, eager to reach the summit, from whence he could most probably gain a fair view of what had in reality occurred. A few leaps carried him to the crest, and he glanced eagerly downward.

But that one glance showed him far more than he expected, or indeed than was agreeable. On the plain were the fleeing forms of his comrades, followed, at a little distance, by a horde of yelling Indians, as he could plainly tell they were. He

took but the one fleeting glance, then his own affairs occupied him.

On the hillside, not fifty yards from where he stood, were gathered over a score of men, who were eagerly watching the chase going on below them. They were all Indians, with the exception of one man, and Donald's heart gave a great throb as he recognized the form of the branded thief and murderer, Enoch Mozey.

Yes, there he crouched within short range, and all unconscious of the presence of the deadliest foe he had on earth. Donald feared to trust his revolver, as he had only a partial view of the miscreant, and hastily unslung his rifle.

But the fates seemed against him, for the barrel struck, with a clear, metallic ring, against a rock just behind the young man. He uttered a curse, and hastily cocked the weapon. But the sound was heard, and turning quickly, Mozey saw his foe standing in full view, with rifle leveled at his head.

Donald fired, but the assassin dodged behind a rock, and the bullet hissed past his ear, and crashed through the brain of the Indian who had stood just behind him. A hasty volley was fired at the daring miner, but he did not wait to learn the result of his shot, or the return compliments, but darted at full speed down the steep hillside. At every leap his momentum increased, until he was in great danger of dashing against the rocks and stunted trees that stood in his course. But his training as an athlete stood him in good stead now, and by almost superhuman exertion, he either dodged or avoided the danger by a nimble flying leap.

He was nearly half-way down the hill before the Indians led by Mozey, reached the top in pursuit. Some imitated the miner's example, while others paused to send an arrow or a bullet after him. But these were futile, owing to the swift zigzag manner of flight.

Then they, too, joined in the chase, and one of them stumbling, fell violently head-first against a huge boulder, so nicely balanced that the shock, which crushed the savage's skull like an egg-shell, started it from its base and sent it thundering in the wake of those further down the hillside.

The rearmost Indian uttered loud cries of warning, but it was too late. The runners could not stop in their course, and

keep their feet. To fall would be almost certain death. They knew but too well what was the cause of those shouts. They could hear the loud crashing as the boulder rolled along, striking against some rock only to gain fresh impetus, or crashing through the stunted shrubbery.

They strove to change their course, and then the huge missile overtook the hindmost, barely missing Mozey in its course, and on its next bound, alighted full upon an Indian, crushing him to atoms with its fearful weight, then thundered on, all gory with the life-blood of its victim, directly in the wake of Donald Mylne.

He shuddered with horror, for he thought his next moment would be his last, but he could do nothing to avert the threatened doom. He was going at a fearful rate, and knew that, did he try to change his course, death would be inevitable.

He strove to breathe a prayer on high for preservation, but his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth, and he could not even think. He neared the foot of the hill, but the rock thundered close behind him.

The boulder dashed the dirt and gravel against his legs, and then, with a horrible roaring noise that sounded like a thunder-clap, bounded clear over Donald's head, covering him with a shower of *débris* like hail, then plowed along the ground a score yards ahead of him.

Thus the spell was broken, and the miner uttered a wild, triumphant shout of joy, of thanksgiving, for his miraculous escape from a horrible death. A few more bounds and he reached the level ground in safety, although the speed at which he was going carried him nearly out to the thicket where he had concealed his horse, before he recovered control of his limbs.

Then he darted into the covert and wrenched off the limb to which his horse was fastened, leaped into the saddle and dashed out into the open plain. Before the foe could collect themselves sufficiently to fire at him, he was beyond range.

The miner passed the huge stone that had so nearly proved his death-warrant, where it had stopped three or four hundred yards out upon the level prairie. He saw with a vindictive joy that the Indians had not altogether escaped its fury, from the fresh blood-stains that had not been entirely obliterated

from its ragged surface, and only regretted that they had not been caused by that of Mozey.

Donald urged his tired horse on at full speed, for he well knew that his foes would not allow him to escape without a chase, and he wished to gain such a distance that he could pause for the night in safety, for he was utterly worn out, mind and body, by the events of the past few days, coupled with his terrible race down the hillside.

But he knew that the trail would be followed, most probably by torchlight, and if once overtaken, he stood but little chance of escape. So he urged on his horse, although it pained him to see how labored his stride became, and every pant found an echo in his own heart. For he loved his noble steed, and well he might. He had owned him for years, and more than once did he owe his life or freedom to his speed and endurance. When he left San Francisco for the East, he intrusted him to a friend, who was to keep him if he never returned. When he did return, the good condition and spirits of Bruce—for he had named him after Scotland's hero—testified how well the charge had been fulfilled.

The sun had set for over two hours, and the moon had arisen, when Donald checked his panting horse and began to look around for some spot where he could find water and good grass to refresh Bruce, while he himself sought the sleep he so greatly needed. He was in a strange part of the country, and felt at a loss to tell in which direction he should ride.

Then he dropped the reins upon the horse's neck, confident that he would make his way to the nearest water, as he had not had any since before noon. He had great faith in the sagacity of Bruce, for he had fully tested it time and again; and when he started off in a steady, unwavering trot, with joyful whicker, he did not check him, but bowed his head upon his chest, with difficulty keeping awake, he was so weary and drowsy.

In a few minutes Bruce stopped suddenly, with a snort as of alarm, and raising himself with an effort, Donald saw the silvery sheen of a broad creek, lighted up by the moon's rays. But that was not what had alarmed the horse.

A bright, steady glow could be seen through the darkness, apparently not more than a foot square. Donald rubbed his

eyes as though he thought it was an *ignis fatuus*, but the light did not vanish. He checked Bruce, who had started ahead again, as though fully satisfied that all was right.

The light he knew could not be a camp-fire in the open ground, for there was a strong breeze blowing, and the fire burned steadily, showing that it must be sheltered, else it would flare and flicker. Donald peered keenly forward, and fancied he could distinguish the faint outlines of a house. The peak of a hill or mountain obstructed the rays of the moon, and it lay in the deep shadow.

Drawing back into the shade, Donald raised his voice in a clear, loud halloo, for he knew that in all probability the inmates of the house were whites, and likely to be friends. If not, he could easily escape under cover of night.

"Hellow your self! Who air ye, an' what do ye want?" was the reply, in a strong tone; at the same time the window that had attracted the miner's attention was closed.

"A white man, who is belated, if not lost, and honest as I hope you are," answered Donald.

After a few minutes' silence another voice called out:

"These are rough, wild times, and we live in a strange country. How do we know that you are what you say, and that it is not a device of the Indians to gain admission to the house?"

"Does my voice sound like an Indian's?"

"It does not, but then that proves nothing. It would not be the first time that a man with a white skin consorted with the savages."

"Then I will go my own way. I would scorn to take hospitality of one who grudged the favor as you do. It will not be the first time I have slept on the prairie with the sky for a counterpane. May you always meet with as kind a reception, is all I wish you," angrily retorted the young miner, turning his horse's head toward the stream.

"Hold on, mister man, don't be snatched. It's all right, I reckon, square; he's alone an's got a white hide," called a voice close at the side of the miner, who started and instinctively grasped his revolver.

"Take it cool, youngster, an' you'll live the longer for it," added the man, as he noted the action. "It's all right. The

boss yorder jest wanted to keep you in play, tell I smelt out who an' what you was."

"Who are you?" demanded Donald, a little uneasily, for he was startled by the abrupt appearance of the stranger when he deemed himself alone.

"Me? Why I'm on'y jest Wren Snearley, at your sarvice. But come, it's all hunky now, an' we'll talk furder when we git inside o' the shanty," said the man, leading the way around the building, where a door was open, and an old man stepped forth to meet them.

"You must pardon my apparent courtesy, sir, but we are in an exposed situation, and are compelled to be wary," he apologized, extending his hand to assist the miner to alight.

"It is I who should apologize," as he dismounted, warmly shaking the proffered hand, "for being so hasty. But I have had a great deal to try my temper of late."

"Well, we will let that drop now. Vent, take the gentleman's horse and put it in the grotto; then cut some grass for it. Take the sickle with you; there it is behind the door," said the host, entering the house, followed by Donald, who paused in momentary confusion, as he found himself in the presence of several women.

Truly he was not a remarkably neat-looking person just then, as he felt when he cast his eyes over his soiled attire, that had suffered considerably during his frantic flight from the red-skins, while a little rill of blood had trickled down his cheek from a slight contusion on his forehead, making a striking contrast to the thick coat of dust and perspiration that had dried upon his face.

Still he managed to stammer through the form of an introduction, and then went down to the creek to improve his toilet. Then returning he found the wife and daughter of Mr. Quirk, as he learned was the name of his host, busily preparing supper, of which he managed to dispatch a fair portion despite his assertion of not being in the least hungry.

This over, he joined his host in smoking a pipe, while he related what had caused his appearance at the cabin. And while he was thus engaged, we will shortly describe the persons who had ventured so far into this then almost unknown portion of the country.

These were ten in number, four women and six men. Ethan Quirk and his wife Maria; their four sons, Wesley, Lloyd, Ventnor and Eugene, all young men of whom a parent might well be proud and choose to do battle for their honor; and Mary Quirk, a rather tall, sensible-looking girl of about twenty years old, rather good-looking, but not a beauty by any means.

The man who had introduced himself as Wren Snearley, to Donald, was, to judge from appearance, an old mountaineer, of nearly fifty years in age. He was very tall, and being remarkably thin, appeared still more so from his erect mode of carriage. In fact, he appeared to be mere skin and bones; but in thinking thus one would be greatly deceived. There was muscle, and plenty of it too, but it had been "boiled down" to a whitleather consistency.

His countenance was honest, but most ludicrously ugly. In his younger days he had evidently been kicked in the face by an iron-shod horse or mule, and his features knocked all awry, and they had forgot to straighten themselves again. Still the twinkle of his one blue eye denoted good-humor, and his looks improved on further acquaintance.

The other two persons were ladies, evidently mother and daughter from the strong family likeness between them, and their age precluded their being sisters. They had been introduced as Montazio; their titles Donald did not catch.

The eldest one must have been wondrously beautiful in her youth, as he could plainly see, but her hair was thickly threaded with gray and her face lightly marked by either the finger of time or sorrow. But the young miner's eyes roved oftener to the face of the younger; and no wonder. For he mentally vowed he had never beheld face so enchantingly fair in all his wanderings, and before he had finished his supper sandwiched with stolen glances at the maiden, he acknowledged inwardly that unless he could induce her to accept his name, and the "incumbrance" with it, he must live and die an old bachelor.

A fearful resolution, but he was never more in earnest in his life. He yielded without a struggle, for it was a case of love at first sight with him.

We can not describe her as we would. It would require a

pen dipped in sunshine and manufactured from a hummingbird's quill. Then you would have to guess at it. We can but say that she was slightly under the medium size, with sunny curls, *not* made over night, glorious blue eyes, and—Bah! she was—Myrla Montazio.

This was the party Donald found he had stumbled on, and he was curious to learn what had induced them to venture hither. When he had concluded his sketch of his adventures, Snearley observed :

"An' so you think that feller 'll foller you with the reds, do ye?"

"I fear so. Not for myself," he added, hastily, "but they may cause you trouble here. But we will hope for the best."

"Yas, that's well enough 's fur 's it goes, but we mought as well git ready for the wust, too," retorted Wren. "Then they won't catch us a-nappin'. Sqnare, hadn't the boys better be gittin' their weepins in order? Plenty o' bullets an' sich like?"

"Why, do you apprehend an attack?" anxiously queried Mr. Quirk.

"Ef you mean by them thar flummerydiddles is thar danger, I say yes, thar is. It may not come, but we may as well git ready. 'Twon't do no harm. Young feller, what's yer name? You'd better lay down an' take a snooze, for thar's work to do. But, fust, how fur from hyar was the reds when you left 'em?"

"About twenty miles, I should judge," said Donald. "Not far from that, either way."

"Then you've two or three hours for sleepin'. Scrounge as much into that time as you please, for then we must tramp," said Snearley.

Mr. Quirk led the way to a small "cubby-hole," cut off in one corner of the other room, where Donald threw himself upon a "shake down," in his clothes, only removing his boots. His head had scarcely touched the pillow before he was fast asleep and snoring most melodiously.

CHAPTER V

IN THE CABIN.

DONALD was awakened by Snearley toward morning, and told it was time to start. When he entered the other room he found Mr. Quirk awake, seated by the fireside, while the brawny forms of the "boys" were lying in one corner upon a pile of robes. The women had disappeared, most probably up in the loft.

Donald ran down to the creek, laved his face and neck, and felt considerably revived, but was a little stiff and sore yet, the effects of his headlong race of the day before.

After a hasty bite and sup, the two scouts took their rifles and started upon their mission afoot. In reply to a question from the young man, as to why they did not ride, Wren Snearley replied :

"Jest think a moment an' you'd see 'thout askin' me. What we want is to find out whether that white thief an' his red *kumpanyeros* (as he termed it) is follerin' your trail. Ef they be, we want to see them, not they *us*. As they'd be purty shore 'ither to hyar or sight us ef we went a critterback, I thort best to foot it. D'ye unnerstand?"

"Yes. I didn't think of that," replied the young man.

They had retraced the trail made by Donald in his flight from the band under lead of Enoch Mozey for several miles without any discovery, and they began to hope that the Indians had lost the trail or decided it was not worth while for them to follow the young miner. But Donald did not expect this. If as he feared, Mozey had full control of the party, he knew to well how deadly and bitter was the hate of the branded thief for all who had punished him, to think that he would abandon the chase so long as the faintest hope remained.

Then Wren Snearley suddenly halted and bent his ear to the ground, an action in which he was imitated by Mylne. Far off in the distance they could hear the faint trampling of a horse's hoofs, apparently directly approaching them in a gallop.

"Wagh! sunkthin's up thar, less he's a crazy feller as straddles the critter. Hoss tired too; hyar 'im stumble. White man's hoss—iron-shod; hyar it clink ag'in' the stones," muttered Snearley, rising erect. "Thar's on'y one, an' we must snake him in. Grab the horse, younker, but don't burn powder."

The next moment a huge figure loomed up before them that half alarmed the old hunter. But they grasped the reins, one on each side, and as the animal was nearly exhausted, they had little trouble in stopping it.

"Ach, mein Got, misder Injun, I zurrenders, I gifes oop," roared Hans, for it was none other, and half dead with fright and fatigue, he rolled rather than dismounted from the horse, begging for mercy, ludicrously mingled with snatches of prayers as they flashed across his mind.

"I pees a prisoner ofe war— Now I lays me town mid sleebe— Ach, ton't kill—"

"Shut up, you big Dutch fool you. Nobody wants to hurt you. Don't you know me—Donald?" muttered the miner, angrily, pushing the man rudely with his foot.

"Who—vas dot you vor shure, Mynheer Tonalt? Yaw, I dought so all der dimes. Vot a pully dime I gids voolin' you vellers! Ton'd you vas boody pad scared eh, I dinks so? You ped I tid," chuckled Jan, when he found who his captors were.

"Look out, Jan, there comes the Indians!" cried Donald.

"Oh mein vaderlandt! I pees deat, ton't shood, I zurrenders!" roared the terrified German, rolling over and over as he tried to get on his feet.

"Shet yer trap, greeny. Who's the fool now? Thar's ne Injuns hyar," muttered Wren, poking Weber violently in the stomach with the muzzle of his rifle.

After some little difficulty the crestfallen Dutchman was got up, and the trio started on the back trail, for they managed to glean from Jan that he had in reality run across a band of Indians some distance back, who were following Donald's trail by torchlight as the latter had feared. He had given them the slip in the darkness, although he had received a painful crease in the shoulder from the volley of rifle-balls sent after him.

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"Oh mein vaderlandt! I pees deat, ton't shood, I zurrenders!" roared the terrified German, rolling over and over as he tried to get on his feet.

"Shet yer trap, greeny. Who's the fool now? Thar's ne Injuns hyar," muttered Wren, poking Weber violently in the stomach with the muzzle of his rifle.

After some little difficulty the crestfallen Dutchman was got up, and the trio started on the back trail, for they managed to glean from Jan that he had in reality run across a band of Indians some distance back, who were following Donald's trail by torchlight as the latter had feared. He had given them the slip in the darkness, although he had received a painful crease in the shoulder from the volley of rifle-balls sent after him.

He said that the most of them were mounted, while others traced the horse's tracks on foot. When asked the number, he said: "Den dousand!" and no questioning could make him waver on this point.

Then they hastened back to the cabin as rapidly as possible, for they wished to make all necessary preparations for the conflict that they knew must follow. Jan groaned dismally at every step, for Donald would not let him ride the exhausted horse that had labored so long under the huge mountain of fat summed up under the name Jan Weber.

The cabin was at length reached, and the signal given that had been agreed upon before the departure of the two scouts. The three hoots of the great horned owl, followed by the cry of the rain-crow. Jan was told to enter, while Snearley led the way to the "grotto" where the horses were stabled.

This was but a short distance from the house, up the bed of a brook. The entrance was well screened by bushes, and on the pebbly path no traces were left by the horses' feet. Inside was a spacious cave, covered with a fine white sand, loose and dry, excepting around where the spring bubbled forth. In the covert the animals would be safe from discovery, unless 'n the daytime, when the entrance was fully commanded by the loopholes on one side of the building. After renewing the feed for his own horse and supplying that of Jan's, the two men returned to the house, where they were admitted by Ethan Quirk.

Snearley superintended the fastening of the doors and windows, and saw that the blocks of the loopholes were loose enough to be removed at a moment's notice. In answer to his inquiries, he learned that there was a plentiful supply of water, brought by the young men while he was absent. Satisfied that all was in readiness for the attack should it come, he laid down to catch a few moments' sleep, if possible.

Donald managed to extract the following particulars regarding the events that had occurred to his comrades since they separated at the foot of the mound from Jan.

It appeared that they were delayed longer than they expected by numerous obstacles, the principal one being a deep ravine which they had to skirt nearly a mile before it grew narrow enough for their horses to leap it. Then they returned

on the opposite side to the edge of the hill, and advanced as before.

Dan Tipberghien, who was slightly in the lead, suddenly halted and fired his rifle at an Indian that he had caught sight of in a thicket some distance off, around a spur of the hill. He was a good shot, and the savage aimed at uttered a wild yell, which was the first intimation his comrades had of the miner's presence. For they were creeping toward the band under Enoch Mozey, who had been pursued hither, and entrenched themselves in a kind of natural fort.

It was an unlucky shot for the whites, for the rage of the slain red-skin's companions was by it turned from their first quarry upon them, and nothing remained for it but a chase, in which superior speed and bottom must tell.

The miners turned tail and fled at the top of their speed, followed by two-score yelling Piutes, as soon as they could reach their animals. It was this that had startled Donald, and led to his discovery of the branded thief and murderer for whom he was searching.

Tipberghien bitterly repented his rashness in thus drawing their rage on his party, but it was too late now for repinings, and they spurred ahead at the top of their speed. To their joy the Piutes did not gain on them, and they knew that, did they protract the chase until dark, their escape would in all probability be insured.

This they were successful in doing, and somehow Jan became separated from his comrades, and losing his way, allowed his jaded horse to pick its own course. Then he almost ran into the trailing-party of Indians under Mozey, but managed to escape under cover of the darkness, but with a flesh-wound in his shoulder, finally meeting with Donald and Snearley, as narrated. Where Herbert and Dan were he could not say.

Day was beginning to dawn when the women descended from the loft, and began preparing breakfast. Donald managed to summon courage enough to approach Myrla and stammered out an inquiry as to how she had rested. To which she made a very proper reply, at the same time drawing to one side of the wooden settee, thus making room for another person by her side.

The blushing young miner tremblingly accepted the mute invitation, and seated himself, wondering at his own temerity and quivering all over as her garments touched his person. But this soon wore off, until he really began to like it, and they *do* say that he finally occupied far more than his share of the seat, but that I always believed was mere malice. However, when they were called to breakfast, Donald started to his feet as though he had been shot, flushing to the tips of his ears, just as though he had been caught doing something out of the way.

Mary Quirk tittered, her mother smiled at her husband, who nodded significantly. Donald observed these telegrams, and became so confused, that in trying to seat himself at the rude slab table, he spread his lower limbs too wide, and came down with a thud upon the floor that made the cups and saucers jingle and totally upset the gravity of the party, who burst out *te-he-ing* or *ha-ha-ing*, according to the nature of their voices.

Stammering an apology, the poor fellow managed to perch himself securely upon the narrow top of the stool, and stole a glance at the mainspring of his accident. He felt slightly comforted as he noted the demure, half-pitying look upon her features, but did not note the merry laugh that was dancing in her roguish eye. Tell me she didn't know why the handsome miner was so bewildered and *outré*, the little witch!

Donald was not the only one who acted strangely and attracted attention. Jan Weber performed his part. It was really heartrending to watch him, poor fellow. Every few mouthfuls he would pause and utter a sigh that might almost be called a snort, his little round pig's-eyes twinkling feebly, from their beds of fat. They would slowly roll around the group, then rest on the features of Myrla. As he stared fixedly at her, his lower jaw would slowly sink, thus revealing such an enormous cavity of unknown depths, which was continually increasing, until Mrs. Quirk began to fear that his head was gradually separating, and Eugene declared that he could see his boots! Then, with a long, wheezing sigh and lingering glance, he would resume his eating for a few minutes, only to repeat the same programme.

"Poor fellow, he's got the wind colic," whispered good Mrs.

Quirk to Mrs. Montazio. "I must make him some hot peppermint."

And in truth she was not far out of the way. Jan had only followed his leader's example, and was in love. Donald observed this, and actually caught the love-lorn Dutchman trying to squeeze out a wink at the amused maiden, and the wrathful youth furtively shook his fist at his enormous rival, mentally promising him a sound thrashing for his presumption.

Ah, well, what silly noodles this love does make of the best of us, at times!

Breakfast was finished at length, and the watch at the loopholes relieved, one man being stationed at each side, for they knew the foe must soon make their appearance. Had they known the real facts of the case, they would not have been so uneasy. But they thought that both bands of Indians were one, under command of him they knew only as Enoch Mozey, whereas we have seen that they were enemies; thus reducing the force they would probably have to do with to less than a score. Against this they had eight trusty men, all good shots, behind a secure breastwork.

Wren Snearley, who was on guard overlooking the direction in which Donald had approached, uttered a low ejaculation, adding:

"The imps hev come. I see ~~me~~ out ahind the cedar scrub yonder. They've sighted the smoke, I reckon, an' he's sneaked on to reconooter. Shell I plug 'im, or wait tell they show thar hand?"

"No, for your life, don't!" exclaimed Mr. Quirk. "They may depart peaceably when they see how well we are protected."

"Snakes an' gizzards, square, d' y' raally think so? Then you don't know red-skin natur', not by no means. Mister man yonder said as how blood was spilt when they's arter him. Skelp fer skelp's thar motter, an' you won't be a nour older 'fore ye smell burnt powder, shore as green persimmons is puckery!" declared the tall hunter.

"I'm afraid you're right, Wren, but I would not have the blood of a human being on my hands, unless in defense of my life, or of those dearer still," solemnly rejoined Ethan.

"Good Lord, square, do you mean to tell me that you never wiped out anybody, not even a red, down thar whar you come from?"

"There are no Indians there, Wren, and I have got along so far without a serious quarrel with a white man, and I hope to be able to say so to the last," replied Mr. Quirk, smiling in spite of his anxiety.

"June bugs an' grasshoppers! what a kentry! No Injuns, no fightin', no nothin'! 'Twouldn't do fer this hoss, nohow, wagh!" grunted Snearley.

During this conversation the parties were keenly watching for the development of matters without, ready either for peace or war. The savage who had been seen by the old backwoodsman in the clump of cedars, had disappeared, probably in order to report to his comrades. Perhaps half an hour passed by without any thing breaking the silence, but they did not relax their vigilance in the least. Then Snearley called out:

"Look yonder! Cussed ef thar hain't a feller a-spreadin' out his shirt to dry! No 'tain't 'ither; he's got it tied on a stick, an' is shakin' it like all possessed. I cain't see him, but I can fetch him out o' yon bush, square, ef you say so," and he cocked his rifle, when Mr. Quirk stayed his hand.

"Hold, Snearley; it's a flag of truce. He wants to parley."

"Hope I may die ef 'tain't a shirt, an' not overly clean, 'ither, dod-rot the 'pudent nigger!" muttered the disgusted hunter.

"Hallo the house!" came in a hoarse voice, which Donald recognized as that of Mozey, despite his attempt at disguising it.

"We hear you; what do you want?" replied Ethan.

"You have two miners with you—a Scotchman and a Dutchman. I want them."

"Supposing they are here—which, mind you, I don't admit—what do you want of them?"

"That does not concern you," retorted the voice. "I have enough friends here with me to take them, if it comes to that. But they are Indians, and if we have to fight for the two men, not one of you will escape. I have nothing against you or

yours, and should be sorry to do you any harm. Still, if one grain of powder is burned, I will not be responsible for the consequences. I will give you ten minutes to consult, and remember you will not have a chance to retract your decision, whatever it is."

Donald glanced at the women, and then turned to Mr. Quirk, saying :

" You have heard what he says, and I know he will do his utmost to keep his word. Now he may be sincere in promising to depart peaceably if we give ourselves up, or he may not. That I can not decide. But I say this : reflect well on your course. If you have any doubts of being able to resist them successfully, I will depart. What Jan will do he must say."

" But what would be your fate if you did so? Who and what is he?" inquired Quirk.

" You remember what I told you last night. Well, that man is he who calls himself Enoch Mozey. The one we branded as thief; the one who murdered Timothy Jenkins. What the result would be, you can guess," returned Donald.

" Say no more, my young friend. What, give over you two men to certain death, perhaps torture, for fear of a little powder and lead? Thank God we are not descended as low as that!" exclaimed Ethan, while his sturdy sons expressed their approval of his decision.

" But remember the women, sir. Think what their fate would be should those fiends without make good their boast," remonstrated Mylne.

" They can answer for themselves," spoke Mrs. Quirk. " What my husband has said, we will adhere to. At least Mary and I do."

Donald glanced toward the other ladies, when Mrs. Montazio replied:

" We will trust to the strong arms of our defenders. It would be murder if you were allowed to go out."

" All we ask is not to be allowed to fall into their hands alive," chimed in Myrla.

" Time's up. Your answer?" called out Mozey who was still concealed.

" Is this," replied Ethan. " If you want these men you

must come and take them. But be warned. The first man that reveals himself will die, so surely as there's faith in a long barrel and true eye."

"D'ye hyar the square, mister man? Now you jest git up an' git, less you want a ragged pill through yer karkidge," roared Snearley.

There were but five loopholes on the side toward where Mozey had been concealed. For fear that an attack would be made on more than one side, three of the Quirk boys were stationed one at each side of the building, with orders to fire upon the first man that showed himself within range. They were in high spirits, for they had never had a chance of trying their skill in sharpshooting, at such high game, and anticipated fine fun. They did not remember that it was a two-sided affair, and that they might suffer instead of the Indians. But they were doomed to learn this fact to their great sorrow, all too soon.

"Ready, fellers," muttered Wren; "they're comin'. I see thar red hides a-diggin' through the bushes!"

Then, yelling and hooting like demons, the savages bounded from their covert, and darted toward the cabin, firing a volley of bullets as they came that pattered harmlessly against the stout log sides of the cabin. At their head was Mozey, who had the upper part of his face bandaged with a cloth, evidently taken from the shirt that had been used as a flag of truce.

At him Donald aimed, and he felt assured that Timothy Jenkins would be fully avenged, but Jan Weber, who stood at his side, frustrated this. It seemed that a bullet had entered the loophole through which he was aiming, and flattened itself against the muzzle of Jan's rifle, a few of the splinters flying into the Dutchman's face. They stung him considerably, and taken so by surprise, he ducked his head violently, unfortunately striking against Donald.

Both rifles were discharged, but their contents whistled harmlessly over the heads of their assailants. With a muttered curse Donald cast the Dutchman violently from him, and drawing his revolver, hastily emptied every chamber in the direction where he had last seen the branded thief.

The foe could not be seen, for the day was calm and foggy, and the smoke arose but slowly. Still they knew that the

Indians had been repulsed, as their hootings were stilled, and no shock was felt against the door. The number of shots fired had shown the Indians that they had underrated the force they had to encounter. This, added to the loss of four of their number—for Donald's volley had found a victim—cooled their ardor, and they fled precipitately, despite the efforts of Enoch Mozey to make them charge anew, when they could have gained the house under cover of the smoke.

When the smoke cleared away, not a form was in sight, and the only traces of the attack and repulse were the several pools of blood, and traces on the ground where the slain had been dragged away. Ethan Quirk expressed a hope that they had fled entirely, but Snearley scouted the idea.

"Don't you b'lieve it, square, it's on'y jest fer a time. The wust hain't showed itself yit, less why was Injuus made? They'll try snaky now, 'stead o' grizzly-b'ar style. It's my 'pinion they'll 'ither try to scorch us out, less starve."

"Fire will have no effect if we can keep them from the door. And even that is not half seasoned. The logs are green and full of sap."

"But how is the roof?" interrupted Donald.

"Safe; they may burn the *outside* shell, but then comes four or five inches of closely-packed sand and clay, lying upon another roof," said Ethan.

"That's a new wrinkle on my horn. Many a life would have been saved if that plan had been followed more generally," said Mylne, approvingly.

Jan Weber had regained his composure after his mishap, and was now leaning against one side of the room, staring wonderingly at Myrla, who pretended she did not see him. His nose had been struck by one of the particles, and it had swollen considerably, shining a bright ruby hue, among the vast expanse of fat, yellow and oily looking.

When Donald's back was turned he made a beckoning motion with one of his fat, chubby hands until he had attracted the maiden's attention, then solemnly uttered, in a wheezy voice:

"*I pee's von patchelor!*" emphasizing the words with a double wink, while a smile that he intended to be extremely fascinating slowly irradiated his features.

The words were plainly heard all over the room, and a general smile was the result, with the exception of Donald, who, with a look that should have withered the stolid Dutchman, asked him :

"Did you speak to me, Weber?"

"Yaw. I dinks I vould like a schmoke."

"Do you want to smother the ladies? You would if you lighted that great hogshead of yours."

"Mein himmel, den dere pee's *swei* in der room," actually retorted Jan, being the first joke he ever was known to perpetrate.

Being in love seemed to improve his wits. A paradox that we leave to the reader's ingenuity to solve. Then Myrla, who for some reason best known to herself, seemed desirous of humoring her elephantine swain, said :

"We are used to smoke. Besides, he can sit by the fireplace, and then the smoke will go up the chimney."

Donald turned away to a loophole, and Jan, after filling his huge pipe, waddled over to the fireplace, but as he passed by the maiden in his rather roundabout course, he added.

"I dinks I vould like doo gid marriet, zome dime boody zoon, eh?" then when he had comfortably seated himself, turned to learn the effect of his last shot, before enjoying his smoke.

At this moment Lloyd Quirk, the second son, while looking through one of the loopholes, imprudently made some trivial remark in his natural tone. Then the next instant, almost before he had ceased to speak, a report was heard and a stream of flame shot full in his face through the aperture, and he reeled back, falling to the floor a dead man.

One glance at his blackened face, a horrible, ghastly sight, told that. He never breathed again. The fatal bullet had passed clear through his brain.

Then came the sharp crack of Donald's rifle, and the death-yell of a savage without announced the avenging of the youth's death. After firing the shot the Indian had started to flee from the house, evidently hoping to gain cover during the confusion that would follow.

How he had gained the wall could only be surmised, unless he had reached it during the first onslaught, and had had no

chance either to escape or damage the whites before. At his death the wild yells of rage and vengeance that echoed from hill to hill, told but too plainly that the cabin was still in a state of siege.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SIEGE RAISED.

THE poor mother's grief was heartrending as she flung herself upon the breathless corpse of her murdered son, and wildly implored him to come back to life, to her. She took the head of her boy upon her lap, and bending, pressed a kiss upon the senseless lips. Then as if the dreadful truth had just reached her heart, she uttered a long, low wail of despair, so mournful and touching that the sound of it chilled the blood of her hearers, and swooned away.

Her husband rejected the proffered aid of Mrs. Montazio, and lifting her in his arms bore her to the bed in the adjoining room. Then returning he directed Wesley and Ventnor to carry the corpse up into the loft, and bidding Wren Snearley to call him if he was needed, returned to where his wife lay, closing the door and drawing the bolt.

Mrs. Montazio took Mary Quirk by the hand, and led her upstairs where the murdered youth was lying. The young men wiped up the stains from the floor, and then resumed their stations in silence. Not a word was spoken by either, nor did they shed a tear. Their hearts were too full, and their brains seemed seared and the tear-fonts dried up. But the deadly glow in their eyes boded fearful vengeance on the enemy, if the opportunity should offer itself.

Snearley stationed himself near the door, as if he feared they would rush forth in their grief, and thus fall a prey to the out-lying savages, who doubtless were posted near to command the entrance, although they could not be seen. The brothers noted his action, and probably divined the reason of it. But they only smiled—a horrible, deadly smile that made even the strong-nerved Donald shudder.

They could not afford to throw away their lives then. They must live—live for vengeance upon the race that had murdered their dearly-beloved brother. That was what the smile said.

Presently Donald motioned for Wren to approach him, and when Snearley stood at his side he whispered :

" You ought to be better acquainted with the range of things around here than I am. Look out and tell me if you see any thing wrong or out of the way," stepping aside to make room for the borderer.

The latter bent his tall form until his eyes were on a level with the loop, and looked long and earnestly, as far as his range of vision could extend. Then he said :

" No, I don't see nothin' onkimmon ; it 'pears to be all on the square. Thar's the gopher-hill, an' the cedar-bush, an'—hold on ; you're right, by thunder ! You'll do, younker, you'll do to travel alone. Durned ef I'd 'a' noticed it less you'd mentioned it fust. Leastways I *mought* not," as if fearful he had admitted too much. "'T air an old trick, but it's almighty slick done. Whoever's a-holdin' that bush hain't no slouch, shore's shootin'. Stan' back an' let me try a pull at 'em," he added, thrusting the muzzle of his rifle into the loophole, then suddenly pausing.

" No, the boys has got the best chaintce to wipe him out. It'll be part pay for that feller's knockin' Lloyd over," and he called the brothers from their stations at the other sides of the building.

" Take a squint out yander at that bush, nigh the bunch of red posies. Take it cool now, 'case thar's a red ahind it. He's arter the nigger that mister man hyar knocked stiff. All three on ye take aim at it, near the ground, an' shorely one on ye 'll fetch the varmint. But ef ye don't why I will. Git good aim an' pull when I whistle," hurriedly directed the one-eyed trapper.

They did as he said, and when the signal came, fired so nearly together that it seemed but one report. The bush fell instantly to one side, and the brawny form of a paint-be-daubed Indian was revealed, lying motionless upon the ground, evidently having been killed instantly.

" Consarn ye !" exclaimed Wren, in mock anger. " What

was ye sech good shots for? I wanted to take the bloody riptyle on the wing."

He received no reply, but uttered a low whistle as Wesley drew his knife and methodically cut a small notch upon the stock of his rifle. The brothers did the same.

"Jee-rusalem crickets! a tally, by all that crawls. I glory in yer spunk, young fellers!"

They did not answer but with a strange smile that was more eloquent than words. And after reloading their rifles, again resumed their stations.

Donald glanced at Myrla, and seeing her sitting in one corner, pale and terrified, told Wren Snearley to call him if he was needed, then went over and sat down by her side, trying to reassure her. But he had not spoken a dozen words when Jan, carefully laying down his cherished pipe, walked across the room, and deliberately seated himself close to the maiden, upon the opposite side.

Then he reached out and took her little hand in his enormous flabby one, squeezing it tenderly, at the same time uttering a voluminous sigh that fairly shook the whole mountain of fat that he called his body. Donald stared in mute amazement, while Myrla was so bewildered that she made no effort to release her hand. Then Mylne waved the Dutchman away with a fiery glance of anger in his blue eye that Jan dare not disobey. He arose with a parting squeeze and sigh, and quoth:

"Yaw, I vill go. I pees tone a'reaty. I makes my bipe schmoke ag'in," and he waddled back to his seat with a sleepy, self-satisfied smile glowing on his greasy features.

"You must not mind him, Miss Myrla," apologized Donald, following the Western style of address on a short acquaintance. "Jan means well, but he is rather peculiar in his mode of expressing his admiration. Do you know that I really believe he is in love with you? Not that I blame him for that, because—"

"Mr. Mylne, is this a time and place for such idle compliments?" interrupted the girl, shuddering. "Remember what is lying up stairs, and that we may all share his fate before the day is passed."

"I ask your pardon, Miss Montazio," said Donald, flushing crimson. "What I said was merely meant to relieve your

mind from such gloomy thoughts, and not in the light you view it. If I have offended you, remember it is the fault of the rough, wild life I have lived, and lack of refined society, rather than of the heart."

"What was it? I forgot. I believe I am going crazy, my head hurts so," murmured Myrla, distractedly.

For several hours nothing occurred worthy of note, and the men grew weary of this painful suspense and fruitless vigilance. Still they did not relax their watch, for they could not tell at what moment an attack would be made. Suddenly Jan Weber exclaimed :

"Mein himmel, schust look mit dot vire-boog! Swei, drei—foofdy ose dem. Doonder, vas vor pees dat, eh, I ton'd know."

The question needed no answer. The enemy were shooting arrows tipped with burning rags, saturated with brandy, at the house, hoping to thus compass their ends. For a few moments they rattled like hail against the roof and walls, coming from behind the projecting spur of the hill and the high bank of the creek.

The ones that penetrated the bark-covered logs burned out with no other effect than to blacken the walls. The wood was too green to burn, as Ethan Quirk had stated. But those that alighted on the roof, as the majority did, soon ignited the resinous cedar shingles, and in a very short time the whole was in a blaze.

The Indians now became nearly frantic in their yells of joy and exultation, making the air hideous with the echoes that rolled from hill to hill. Donald was a little uneasy lest the entire house should ignite, but as he glanced at Snearley and the Quirk brothers, he gained comfort from their calm and derisive looks. They appeared to feel perfectly safe.

In a short time this confidence was justified by the change in the tones of the enemy. Instead of being triumphant, they were full of disappointment and chagrin. In fact, the outer shell had burned furiously for a few moments, then, as it was exhausted, leaving nothing but the dry, closely-packed sand and clay, it died away, thus revealing to them the uselessness of that agent.

"Wagh! Thet's played out anyhow," said Snearley. "But

thar's one thing they can do, an' that's to *starve us out*, per-
vided, in course, ef we let 'em do it. They see fire won't
work, an' they're too durned keerful o' thar hides to try to
bu'st in that door ag'in."

"But won't they try to undermine us when it gets dark to-
night? They could do it easily," asked Donald, after a slight
pause.

"They *mought*, that's so. But wou'd they? It'd be resky
biz on thar part. But I'll tell you what I've been thinkin'," said
the old borderer, still standing at his loophole. "I don't
b'lieve thar's over twenty o' them imps out thar, less they'd be
more open like. Now, I move that we take up some o' the
floor an' dig a hole to the outside big enough for a man to slide
through purty quick. Then when dark com's, why five or
six of us can mosey out an' liev a peek at the red imps. Ef
thar's any show, gin 'em a dose, an' then vamose for the
ranche."

Donald pondered on the subject for a few moments, as if de-
liberately weighing every chance for or agai st it, then he re-
plied:

"I believe it could be done without much risk. But I
think one man should try it first, and if there are not more
than you say, our best plan would be to mount the horses, and
we could clean them out, or score them so badly that it would
amount to the same thing."

"You're right, by mighty, my boy!" exclaimed Wren
Snearley, in admiration. "We can six go; one man can
guard the gopher-hole. But the Dutchman—is he worth
any thing?" he added, eying Jan rather doubtfully.

"Get him roused up once and he will do wonders with that
big, ungainly form of his. He will fight well with me," said
the miner, promptly.

"Yaw!" quoth Jan, mansfully. "I vos pin a zoldier von
simes. I vighds like der tuyvel all der dimes, and kills efery
von mit dem vellers, by shingo! I vighds vor *her*, eh, you
dinks pedder so?" winking affectionately at Myrla as he placed
a live coal in his pipe, and then worked his cheeks in and out
like a blacksmith's bellows.

"Well, then, mister man, you take my place hyar, an' I'll
begin grubbing so's we'll be ready," said Wren, and then with

the aid of Weber he tore off several of the puncheons that served for a floor.

Then with a shovel he began his task, throwing the dirt as soon as I opened out into the room. Then the hours rolled slowly on, with an occasional yell or shot from the besiegers, as if to warn the inmates of the hut of their continual presence.

At length the old hunter desisted from his task, saying that there was but a thin crust to be broken through when the time came for their sally, as he did not deem it prudent to fully open it before dark, lest the aperture should be discovered by the outlying Indians, and measures taken by them to frustrate their plans.

It was now nearly sunset, and Ethan Quirk appeared, noiselessly closing the door behind him, saying that his wife had at length fallen asleep, worn out by the violence of her grief. His daughter and Mrs. Montazio came down from the loft, and when Mary was led to a seat by Myrla, the elder lady assisted Mr. Quirk in preparing supper.

As it grew darker, a blanket or buffalo-robe was hung up behind each man, as they guarded the four sides of the house, so that the firelight should not betray them to an enemy's shot, by shining through the loopholes. All but the ones in actual use were closed by the blocks cut for that purpose.

Ethan Quirk had been informed of the intended sally, and expressed his approval, adding that all could go excepting one man to keep guard over the tunnel during their absence. Then all but the sentinels sat down to supper, after which these were relieved to take their turn.

"Which one of you is going first, to see how the ground lays?" asked the father.

"I am," replied both Dan and Wren Snearley, and then a friendly dispute arose between the two as to which one should perform the perilous duty, which was finally decided by the bony hunter saying:

"Look hyar, mister man, you mought as well gin 'n fust as last. You've had more fun 'n I hev, wiped out one more red, an' go I will. Ef you sais no, then the best feller at a rough an' tumble rakes the persimmings!"

"Oh, very well, Snearley," laughed Donald. "If you are as

earnest as all that comes to, go, by all means. I should be very sorry to fight a friend when there are so many enemies at hand."

"Bully for you, young feller; give 's yer paw. I freezes to you; ef I don't, chaw me!" and the dispute was ended in a warm hand-pressure.

It was now sufficiently dark for the purpose, and Wren feared to delay longer lest the enemy should surround the building so closely that discovery would be inevitable. So, noiselessly breaking through the thin crust, he emerged from the hole and glided away in the darkness, after arranging a signal by which he was to be known on his return. He was to pause by the gopher-hill, and after dampening the phosphorus on a bunch of matches, was to rub it to his hand, holding it toward the cabin for a moment before blowing it out.

The minutes passed slowly enough to those he had left behind him, until half an hour had elapsed, although it appeared treble that long, when Donald called out in an eager whisper that the lighted hand was visible. And in a few moments more, Snearley dove through the tunnel and stood in their midst. One look at his face told that the news was good. And so it proved.

"When I moseyed out I kinder sidles around sorter keerful, an' when I retched the crick yander, I see'd the shine of a fire. So I snaked to'rms it, an' soon found out that the reds war a-holdin' a keouncil like. I counted noses, an', with a white-skinned nigger, they 'mounted to jest *thirteen*. Then I found out that three reds war on the look-out, an' I'll take my davy that thar's on'y eighteen in the whole caboodle.

"Now, cain't we six fellers wipe 'em out? 'Case in co'se the boss he stays hyar to knock any o' 'em on the noddle ef they try to git in while we fix the hosses. You're mighty right, we jest can!" triumphantly added Snearley.

No further comment was necessary, and upon the scout's saying he could safely lead them to the grotto without their being discovered, the little band silently disappeared in the gloom. Wren's boast was made good and they entered the cave unseen. Quickly girthing on saddles and adjusting bridles, each man led his horse from the cave down the narrow ravine, hoping thus to reach the bed of the main creek, and

so approach the foe closely enough to make an effective dash before they took the alarm, and scattered into the darkness.

They had arrived opposite the house when they heard a loud yell in front of them followed by a rattle of fire-arms, mingled with the hoarse shouts of white men. The thud of horses going in a swift gallop, was heard, and the shrieks and cries of the wounded. The Indians had been attacked.

"Forward, men, let's have a hand in!" yelled Donald, as he leaped his horse from the creek.

"For God's sake, who was that? Is it you, Donald?" shouted a voice that the miner well knew, as a horseman appeared through the gloom cast by the hills.

"Herbert; is it really you?" exclaimed Donald.

"Yes; I came across a party of prospectors, and they joined me to hunt you up."

"I can't stop now, Willie, or that infernal thief Mozey will escape."

"What, was *he* there? Oh, if I had only known it!" and Herbert dashed after his comrade, who was far ahead, calling for the men to follow him and spare no one.

All this occurred in one-tenth of the time it takes to read it, but the Indians had been routed, and darting away into the darkness, soon leaped upon their horses and fled as fast as terror could urge their animals. They were hotly pursued, and those overtaken met with short shrift.

Donald heard the hoarse shout of Mozey, as he strove to rally his men, and directed Bruce toward the point whence it came. He saw the branded thief spur out from the dense shadow cast by the towering mountain, and flee over the level ground that was brilliantly lighted by the moon. A deep ravine or cañon prevented him from continuing in this friendly cover.

The young miner called the fugitive by name and uttered the most biting taunts he could conceive, hoping to incense Mozey so that he would await his coming, and trust to a hand-to-hand fight for settling their feud, but in vain. He pressed Bruce to the utmost, and most gallantly did the noble horse respond, but the distance did not lessen, or if so, it was so gradually as to escape the notice of the raging miner. He gritted his teeth in fury as he found that for once Bruce had

met his match, and feared that Mozey would reach the hills he was aiming for in safety, and where he could easily baffle pursuit among their recesses.

Mile after mile was traversed in that mad race of life and death, and far ahead Donald could see a long, low, dark range that he knew were hills, which, if the fugitive reached first, then good-by to revenge, at least for the time being. The murderer could easily baffle pursuit by leaving his horse and concealing himself in some deep cañon, where the moon's rays did not penetrate.

In vain he urged his horse with both heel and voice; the result was the same. The hills loomed up higher and plainer in view, and in his mad rage Donald drew his knife and pressed it repeatedly into the hips of his steed. With an almost human scream of pain and terror, the poor animal shot forward with wondrous swiftness, and rapidly gained on the fugitive.

With a grim smile, Donald drew his revolver from his belt, and taking as deliberate aim as possible under the circumstances, fired. But the fugitive and his horse sped on uninjured. One after another of the chambers were discharged, with the same result.

Almost wild with rage and fury lest the ex-miner should, after all, escape his vengeance, Mylne uttered fearful curses and blasphemies, as he slipped another cylinder in place and aimed once more.

The hills were close at hand, and yet at his third shot his foe was still unharmed. But when the next report came, the fugitive's horse stumbled and fell, the bullet having broken his leg. Its rider alighted nimbly upon his feet, and with a few bounds he reached the dense shadows cast by the towering hills, despite the missiles that his foe sent after him.

Donald did not pause, although he expected every moment that Mozey would fire at him; indeed, he wondered that he had not done so long since. He dashed ahead until he reached the rising ground. Then he paused and listened with wildly-beating heart.

He heard a crackling sound among the bushes, a little to the left, and rushed toward it. All in vain. It was the ex-

trance to a large cavern, covered with bushes and vines, intermingled with rocks and bowlders that had at times rolled down from the rocks above. A search in the night-time would be worse than folly, for the beams of the moon did not shine there, and the chances would all be in favor of the fugitive. He knew that it would be almost certain death, and with a bitter imprecation he dismounted from his jaded horse.

He removed the saddle, and dropping one side of the bits, he allowed Bruce to feed upon the grass. Then he sat down, leaning against a huge bowlder, to await the coming of daylight with what patience he could summon. For he knew that he could not find his way back to the house at night, as he had paid no heed to the landmarks or direction in which he had come. Besides, he intended searching for Mozey as soon as it was light enough to see, for he did not entirely despair, knowing that the fugitive was on foot. He passed the long hours drearily enough, as he feared to sleep lest his foe should slip past him in the darkness.

He could hear the groans of the crippled horse lying on the plain, and presently he distinguished, far distant, the wild, wailing howls of the California wolf, as it scented the blood from afar. Then came the terrible screams of the helpless horse, who well knew the fearful significance of those cries, and managing to arise, he hobbled away as rapidly as he could. But a relentless foe was upon his track, and Donald prepared his arms as they swept so near that he could plainly see the phosphorescent glow of their small eyes; for he knew that at times they would attack even man. His trembling horse stood close at his side, snorting with terror at the dense, dark, howling mass, but they swept by without molesting them.

Then came the united yelping, and Donald knew that the doomed horse had been pulled down, for the frightful shriek, unlike any other known sound, told him that. He quickly on saddle and rode swiftly from the spot, for he knew that their thirst for blood would only be whetted by the one horse, and that they would soon return to where they had seen him. However, he did not ride far, for he was well acquainted with the species in question, and knew that they never trusted to speed to secure their game, although they are remarkably

swift and tireless ; but depended wholly upon creeping upon it unawares, unless their instinct tells them it is disabled.

He could hear their frightful yells and snarlings, and once he even thought he could distinguish the sounds of a human being's voice in mortal agony, but of this he was not certain. He laughed a horrible laugh as the thought struck him that it might be the voice of Enoch Mozey, and he waited impatiently for the dawn to assure himself whether or no his suspicions were correct.

At length the day broke, and he rode rapidly to the cañon where his enemy had eluded him, and securing his horse in a dense thicket, he drew his revolver and cautiously glided in among the rocks and tangled shrubbery, advancing with great care, and half expecting every moment to receive a shot from the murderer.

But this fear was entirely groundless, if from no other cause than that Mozey had had his only revolver knocked out of his hand during the *melée* of the previous night, and was too hardly pressed to regain it. Hence it was that he had not returned Donald's compliments during the long chase.

After, perhaps, an hour's search, the young miner saw a wolf slink away from behind a boulder, snarling and licking his chops as he went, as though loth to leave. Donald's heart gave a great bound, and then stood still for a brief space, as he thought that his hope was about to be fulfilled ; that here it was that the branded thief and murderer had met his fate. Then he bounded forward and turned the corner of the rock.

A fearful sight met his gaze. The ground around and the bushes adjoining were torn and trampled, while the bones of a man lay scattered over the blood-stained ground. The wolves had done their work well, and the sight sickened even the stout heart of Donald Mylne. He turned away with a shudder, but he felt a stern, vindictive joy that the assassin of the noble, great-hearted Timothy Jenkins had met with the retribution that he so fully merited. He had only one regret : that was, that it had not been his hand that had avenged the foul deed.

Kind reader, we do not ask or expect you to sympathize with or admire Donald Mylne. It is not a fancy character

we are painting; not a marvel of heroic nobleness, of immaculate goodness. No; it is a man no better, and not much worse, than the generality of men, considering the rough, wild tutoring he had received from his early youth upward. I present him as he really *was*, and not as he should be. He is an authentic character, not a fictitious one.

CHAPTER VII.

RETROSPECTIVE.

WE beg the reader's kind indulgence while we revert to a period some twenty years prior to the opening of our tale, to detail some facts necessary to the understanding of the incidents already, and to be, narrated.

In the year 183-, there lived in Quincy, Illinois, a man by the name of Marcus Barnett. He was reputed to be enormously wealthy, and of a hard, harsh disposition. And in this Dame Rumor was correct. But she added that he was miserly.

Well, perhaps he was, in some things. He had come to this country from England, a poor, friendless boy, who had to do service as scullion on board the ship in order to pay for his passage. This fact, however, had long since been forgotten by all save himself, and he was not a man to mention it, for he was proud, inordinately so, and this pride increased in the same ratio that he grew older and more wealthy.

He married early in life, and *they said* that his wedding-lot was any thing but happy. Rebecca Wynne was too gentle and meek for him, and he led her a cruel, bitter life until she died, after the lapse of thirteen years, leaving four children. One had died as an infant.

But as the years rolled on, death claimed all but one, Jennie, who, at the date mentioned, was an acknowledged belle and beauty. She resembled her mother in looks, but she inherited a good share of her father's spirit and will. As may be imagined, she did not lack for suitors when the fact of her

being the sole heiress of Marcus Barnett's great wealth was added to her charms of person and mind.

But she was hard to please, and one after another who offered her marriage were rejected, thus giving her the unenviable reputation of being a confirmed coquette. I do not think she was that, only the right one had not yet appeared. And many a stormy scene did the father and daughter have on the subject, for many of the proposals were highly advantageous, in a mere worldly sense. There was the same ending to all, for the hard old man passionately loved—almost idolized—his only child, and she would carry her point.

Still, the man soon appeared who was destined to subject the proud beauty, and at length she was forced to acknowledge it. Perhaps the climax was hastened by the stern opposition of Marcus Barnett, who had no liking for the handsome, polished Guido Montazio.

From what could be learned of his antecedents—and that was little enough—he was a political refugee from sunny Italy. How true that was, none but himself could tell, for he was reticent upon that point, even with Jennie. Her father emphatically pronounced it all bosh, adding that he was most probably a runaway cook or barber; but most assuredly an unprincipled adventurer and fortune-hunter, who was only smitten with the heavy bank-account of Marcus Barnett.

His only visible means of support was what he gained from music-teaching, but some few persons hinted at a less respectable branch of his calling. That of playing *on the flats* entirely too much for harmony, by means of cards and dice. But if so, he was cunning enough to hide all unquestionable proof, and when he horsewhipped a gentleman publicly or hinting at such a thing, these rumors gradually died away.

Jennie's father forbid him the house, but, "love laughs at locksmiths," and the lovers contrived to meet often. Then the crisis came, and Guido Montazio formally requested the honor of becoming a dutiful son-in-law to Mr. Barnett. The latter was perfectly dumbfounded, as the saying goes, and as soon as he could command himself to speak coherently, he ordered the Italian to be gone lest he should treat him as he deserved and have the servant kick him into the street.

With a polite bow the lover obeyed the order, but was in no wise disconcerted, for he well knew with what reception the proposal would meet, and had only made it to satisfy the scruples of Jennie, and his plans for the future had already been fully matured.

That night there was a stormy scene in that gloomy old house that far eclipsed all others in fierceness and intensity and Jennie, on refusing to discard the man she loved so well, was locked up in a bedchamber as a prisoner until she should come to her senses, as the angry old gentleman expressed it. But she was not stinted in money, and with that what can not one do? Her maid was bribed, and Montazio informed of how matters stood.

Three days after that both mistress and maid were among the missing, and a note left upon the table, signed "your dutiful daughter, Jennie," told Marcus Barnett the terrible news: that his only child had eloped with Guido Montazio. His dutiful daughter! He shrieked out the words in his agony, and then fell heavily upon the floor, in a paralytic fit.

He was gotten to bed and medical aid summoned. But he never left the bed until he left it for the grave. His entire right side, up to his neck, was dead. His voice was gone, and when he strove to speak the words died away in his throat in a feeble rattle.

The lovers, still accompanied by the maid, took the boat for St. Louis, where they were married. Guido Montazio was particular in having all things done in a legal manner, for he was far too desirous of success in his little speculation—for such he considered it—to risk it by negligence. We do not mean that he was not in love with Jennie Barnett; in that we would be wrong. He loved her as well as it was in his nature to love anybody but himself, although, had she not had great expectations, not one thought would he have bestowed upon her. It was the heiress, not the woman, that he craved.

Jennie was of age, and there was nothing to prevent the marriage. For some time the moon was all honey, but then the exchequer grew low and some means must be taken to replenish it. Guido had kindly allowed Jennie to write several letters to her parent, and beg forgiveness for disobeying his com-

mands, but the answer was the same in every one. The letters were returned unopened.

Mentally cursing the old man's obstinacy, and condoling his truly alarmed wife, Guido advertised for music pupils, in the city papers. But he was a stranger, and no application was made for his services. Then he secured a position as second violinist in a theatrical band, where the wages, if small, would still suffice to keep the wolf from the door.

Jennie managed to find a market where she could dispose of what little embroidery she found time to complete during the intervals of her household duties, for they had taken a small house and were not able to hire a servant. Occasionally she would write to her father, but without ever receiving a line in return. She did not know how he had been stricken down by her desertion, else she would have gone to him despite all. Her husband had managed to keep from her sight all the papers that teemed with the "Elopement in High Life," and accounts of Marcus Barnett's serious illness.

He lay in a very precarious state, and they could not say one day that he would be alive on the next. Still his indomitable spirit bore him up, and his resentment against his daughter augmented instead of decreasing. Whenever a letter would arrive from her, he would have it inclosed in an envelope and returned unopened. His business had been closed up, but no one, excepting himself and the old lawyer, Silas Grable, knew what disposition had been made of the proceeds.

Time rolled on and a little baby girl was given to Jennie and Guido Montazio, but the husband's love from this time seemed to decline instead of growing stronger, and the disobedient daughter's punishment grew almost greater than she could bear. He took to drinking in excess, and every cent that he could earn, or procure from his wife, was spent at the saloons or gambling-hells.

He would be absent for a week at a time, and then return, sick, penniless and half naked, for her to nurse; and that was not the worst. For when she would refuse him what she had scraped together to pay for the medicine or food, he would curse her, and too often cruelly beat her or little Myrla. His absence would grow more frequent and of longer duration,

until one day, a little over a year after little Myrla's birth, she received a note from him, saying that he was going further south, and she must now shift for herself.

And for two months she toiled on, broken in health and spirits, when one day a paragraph in an old scrap of paper caught her eye. It was an extract from a Quincy paper, and contained an account of her father's paralytic attack. It nearly killed her, for she loved her parent despite all that happened, and this was the first intimation she had of his illness.

She worked night and day until she had enough money to pay her fare to her old home, and with Myrla she took the steamer for Quincy. When she reached the door she saw by the name on the door-plate that Marcus Barnett still lived there, and when the door was opened, she rushed past the servant and entered the chamber he used to occupy. And there on the bed lay the pitiful remnant of her father, whom she had left a hale, hearty man, now a helpless cripple.

How they met no one but themselves knew, but from that day Jennie Montazio took her place as her father's nurse, until the feeble wail of another being was heard in that grand, gloomy old mansion, and Willie Herbert Montazio was ushered into the world.

Time rolled on, and Marcus Barnett slowly sunk into his grave, brought there by his daughter's disobedience. When the funeral was over the will was read. It was a strange one, substantially as follows:

During her life, his daughter, Jennie Montazio, was to have a pension of one thousand dollars per annum, on condition that she had no further connection with her husband, Guido Montazio. In case she did, then the annuity was to cease. The whole of his property was to be invested until his youngest grandchild was of age, when it was to be equally divided between him and Myrla, with the same proviso that restricted their mother. Should Montazio die before that time, and satisfactory proof furnished of the fact, then Jennie Montazio was appointed sole trustee of the children, and legatee of one-third the entire fortune. In case she outlived them, she was to be the sole heir.

Some two or three months after Marcus Barnett's demise, Guido Montazio reappeared and sought an interview with his

deserted wife, but she refused to see him. In some manner he learned the contents of the will, and, baffled, he left the city.

A year from that time his wife read an account of one of his exploits, in an eastern paper. It seems that while traveling down the Hudson river he became intimate with a Southern merchant, who accidentally divulged the fact of his having a large sum of money in bank-bills upon his person, which he collected on the trip. Montazio managed to get him intoxicated, and during the night, as they both occupied the same state-room, robbed him of his wealth, and getting off at a by-station, was far away before the loss was discovered.

The merchant published a full description of the robber, and offered a large reward for his apprehension, so that the pursuit was so hot and close that Montazio fled to California, where he was finally lost track of.

The deserted wife continued to live at Quincy, and as time passed on and Willie grew older, she concluded to send him to the Harvard University to complete his education. She had lived frugally and had saved sufficient money from her annuity for that purpose. The children had never been told of the fortune that would become theirs in due time, for she feared the result of such a knowledge before their habits and characters were formed. Thus both Myrla and Willie thought they were very poor.

Willie entered the college in his seventeenth year, and studied diligently for over one year, when he made a short visit home. He found that his mother had been compelled to remove Myrla from the seminary she had been attending, so that he could finish his course. At this he declared that he would not go back, and stood out for some time, but finally they persuaded him, all the more easily that his own wishes were the same as theirs.

When he arrived he found that he should have to room with a young man a few years older than himself, and with whom he became very intimate. It happened that this Henry Eastgate had an elder brother in business in San Francisco, and who wrote long, glowing letters of the gay life in town, and the rapidity with which a fortune could be picked up at the mines if a man was steady and disposed to work.

Eastgate was intending to go out by steamer in a few weeks, and finally succeeded in coaxing Willie to go with him, lending him the money necessary to pay his passage. After making arrangements with one of his chums to receive and forward letters between him and his mother, Willie started for the new Dorado. He had determined not to let his mother or sister know where he had gone until he returned to them with a fortune in his hand, thinking in his credulous inexperience that it would be easy to do before his absence was discovered.

On the steamer he became acquainted with Donald Mylne, and then with the other miners. He said that he was Willie Herbert, an orphan, and thus established a bond of sympathy between himself and Donald. Then they finally journeyed up to Fall river, where we found them when our story opened.

Some time after the lad's departure for the land of gold, a young man returned to Quincy from the university, and Mrs. Montazio, learning the fact, sought an introduction, wishing to hear from Willie by one who had seen him lately. And then he told her the fact. It was a dreadful blow to her and Myrla, for they feared he would never return.

Three or four months after this event, the family of Mrs. Quirk, a very intimate friend of theirs, announced their intention of removing to California, and the almost distracted mother determined to join them. In spite of her friends' remonstrances, she did so, and they, in company with a good-sized train, safely passed overland to their destination.

Then each family went their own way, Ethan Quirk engaging the services of their guide, Wren Snearley, for one year. The adventurers finally selected a location that they deemed rich in gold, and soon built them a stout, substantial log-house. Then two of them at a time would go out prospecting, leaving the other four to guard the women at the house.

One day Snearley and Wesley Quirk, while in chase of a bear that they had wounded, followed its trail into a good-sized valley. The only perceptible entrance to it being through a narrow cañon choked partially up with rocks and climbing plants that matted the cedars and thorn-bushes together so thickly that the defile appeared to end abruptly.

Had it not been for the bear, they never would have discovered the valley, but they pressed through where it had gone, and in a short time killed their game. But that was not the only result of this truly fortunate adventure, for as Wren went down to the creek to quench his thirst, he uttered a low cry of surprise and began rapidly picking something up with both hands.

Wesley Quirk heard the cry, and leaving the bear he was skinning, joined his comrade, and then the glorious truth burst upon his mind. They were in a valley of gold; had literally discovered the golden river! For the sands at their feet were yellow with the precious particles.

They forgot the game then, and with the aid of their knives the two had collected nearly a pound of the "scale gold," when the sun sunk behind the hills. Snearley, more temperate than his hot-blooded young companion, advised an immediate return to the prairie beyond, while there was yet light enough to see to cover their trail in both going and coming, lest the keen eyes of some wandering prospector should discover their precious secret.

Slowly retracing their footsteps with many a backward look at the countless treasure they were leaving behind them, the mouth of the cañon was entered, and once out of sight, they worked diligently but thoroughly, until the trail was hidden nearly half a mile from the defile. Then they turned and ran at the top of their speed toward the log-cabin, eager to announce this great discovery to their friends.

They were loth to believe such good news, until the collected scales of the precious metal were exhibited, and then what a scene of rejoicing did those rude, bark-covered walls witness on that never-to-be-forgotten night when their fortunes were first considered as made. The mine was worked every day, the dirt paying immensely, while some of the party would hover around the pass, to mislead any intruder who should chance along.

All Mrs. Montazio's inquiries regarding Willie were fruitless, still she did not despair. What would she have said, could she have known that her runaway son and husband were then living beneath the same roof, although not suspecting how nearly they were related. For Enoch Mozey

was none other then he who had called himself Guido Montazio. Thus matters stood at the time Donald Mylne discovered the lone cabin and sought refuge within it from his vindictive pursuers.

CHAPTER VIII.

DONALD ON A "TARE."

WE left Donald as he turned away from the spot where the man had been devoured by the wolves, and slowly walked toward his horse. When he reached Bruce he vaulted into the saddle and rode briskly toward the spot where he had maimed the outlaw's horse, when he took up his own trail and steadily followed it without pausing until he reached the scene of the affray the previous night.

He saw the bodies of several Indians still lying where they had fallen, although they had been despoiled by the victors of their weapons and whatever ornaments had caught their fancy. Then he turned the spur of land from whence he could catch the first glimpse of the house. As he did so, he uttered an ejaculation and violently pulled up his horse, almost throwing him upon his haunches.

And really, for one so deeply smitten as he was with Myrla Montazio, it was not a very pleasing sight that met his eyes. She and Willie were walking toward the spring, he with a bucket upon one arm, while the other was twisted lovingly around the girl's lithe, supple waist; then he bent his head and kissed her. Donald could see that the caress was affectionately returned, and not knowing in what relationship they stood to each other, could interpret the action in but one way, that they were affianced lovers.

His hand glided mechanically to the butt of his revolver, and he half drew it. But he could not forget that Herbert had once been his sworn friend, and thrusting it fiercely back into its sheath, he struck Bruce violently with his heels and dashed wildly forward, clearing the wide creek with a deer.

like bound, and then, utterly regardless of the wondering exclamations of his friends, rode away at full speed over the prairie.

He was wild, mad, and his heart seemed on fire, while his rage found vent in loud, hoarse shouts and cries that frightened his horse into increased speed. For hours he rode thus, having sunk into silence, and not caring whither he was going, only moving when Bruce flagged a little, and then but to press his heels against the heaving flanks, in the vain hope of running away from the fearful blow that had befallen him.

Then, with a long groan, Bruce stopped so suddenly that Donald was nearly thrown from the saddle, and fully aroused. He quickly dismounted, for he feared that his horse had been seriously injured by the wild race. But after a time he found that these fears were groundless, when Bruce began to crop the grass that grew scantily around.

After a couple of hours' rest he again mounted, and rode leisurely along until he managed to ascertain where he was, and then struck the most direct route for Shasta City. He had no settled plan for his further actions, at present, but he wished to get away from where she whom he believed false to him was staying.

False; for so the young miner called her to himself, although it would have been hard for him to bring in a verdict of guilty, even to himself. He had seen her but for a few short hours, and but spoken to her several times—never of love as connected with himself.

But his love for Myrla had grown so suddenly and all-absorbing that it seemed as if it had lasted for years, and that he had a claim upon her heart superior to all others—that she was in a measure his alone. Very foolish and all that, we know, but his plea was, *he was in love*—and what else could one expect?

He rode on until night, and then halted by the side of a well-wooded creek. He had so far recovered his senses that he was able to make a hearty meal from a turkey that he had shot; and after this he rode on a mile or two further, in order to shun any dangerous visitors that the smoke or glare of his fire might attract.

About the middle of the next afternoon he rode into Shasta

City, in the county of the same name. It was one of those Western towns that build up in a night, as may be said, and but too often decline with the same rapidity. The buildings were primitive enough, but there was plenty of bustle and confusion in the wide streets, or pathways, to speak more correctly.

At that time it numbered probably three thousand five hundred inhabitants, and one could "see the elephant" there provided his bag of dust was long enough. The "dance-houses," "free-and-easys," gambling hells and "saloons" were to be met with at every turn. The crack of a pistol or roar of a "free fight" surprised no one, and it was customary when one friend met another in the morning, to ask, "How many killed last night?" If the reply was, *none*, that was a phenomenon to be wondered over, and often alluded to during the day. Such was Shasta City at the time treated of.

Donald dashed at full speed along the street, until he suddenly drew rein before a house that proffered "entertainment for man and beast," and throwing the reins to the Chinese hostler, stepped toward the door. There was a big, burly-looking miner, leaning with crossed legs across the passage, who did not move to clear the way. Donald laid his hand upon the fellow's shoulder, saying:

"Stand aside, sir; I wish to enter."

The miner rudely shook off his touch, and growled out, in a surprised tone:

"Who the blazes air you that talks so big, an' what do you want, anyhow?"

"To give a plain answer to a plainer question, it is none of your business who or what I am," retorted Donald, his gray eyes flashing wickedly with suppressed ire.

"Thunder an' lightnin', boys, do you hyar that? Don't he crow big fer a banty? Say, stranger, do you know who you air a-talkin' to?—do ye know who I am?" asked the bully, in a contemptuous voice, while there was a slight stir among the crowd, and a few faint cheers, most probably from some of his toadies.

"Well, I can not say that I have the honor of your acquaintance, respected sir," replied Mylne, in a deliberate tone, as he looked his adversary full in the eye. "But to judge

from your appearance I should say you were a played-out bummer and dead-beat."

The crowd stared aghast at this answer, and no one appeared to be more amazed than the man to whom it was addressed, who stared stupidly at the young man, and then burst out into a hoarse laugh, at length uttering :

"Stranger, is your coffin spoke fer? I'm Jack Copeland, the grizzly o' the mounts. My father was a norther, an' my—"

"Exactly," interrupted Donald, who began to grow impatient. "You mean to say that you are full brother to that animal who sits on her tail and barks at the moon. And now stand aside. I am tired of this fooling."

"So am I," roared Copeland, "but you must larn your lesson fust. Whenever I see a leetle rooster like you a-crowin' too loud, I jest puts a stopper on his beak like this," and he thrust forth an enormous paw, intending to grasp the nasal extremity of his pupil.

"And get a touch of his spurs, like this," yelled Mylne, as he delivered a double blow with his fists full in the huge bully's eyes, that hurled him like a shot across the bar-room.

Then before he could arise, Donald jerked the revolver and knife from the man's belt, and cast them into the horse-trough outside the door. Copeland staggered to his feet and felt for his weapons, but did not advance toward his antagonist, who leaned quietly against the wall with his revolver drawn and cocked.

"Look here, my grizzly bear friend, you may as well throw up your hand. Brag won't do. If you offer to touch me now, I'll shoot you like a dog. Go and poultice your eyes, and if you are able, in the morning I will take another lesson from you. But it's no use now. I don't want to murder a man, as it would be were we to try a shot now."

"Gi' me a pistil, somebody! gi' me a pistil!" raged the bully, "an' I'll see whether I kin shoot or not!" and he grasped one from the belt of a man near by, then wildly fired at Donald, who suddenly crouched to the floor, and the bullet passed over his head, knocking off his hat.

"Curse you, you fool; if you *will* have it!" gritted Donald, leaping forward and bringing down the heavy brass-bound

butt of his revolver full upon Copeland's temple before he could fire again, felling him like an ox in the shambles.

"There, men," exclaimed Mylne, "I give the dog his life, but take him away. Take him away, or by all that's good, I'll finish the job with a blue pill."

Then he stepped out down into the middle of the street, with his pistol cocked, and called out in a voice that was half choked with rage and furious passions:

"And now if there are any of his friends who would like to try a shot for him, let them step out! The little bantam rooster is ready for any who think they can cut his comb. So the poor fellow has no friends? All right, then. Come along all hands and take a drink at my expense," he added, more calmly, as no one accepted the *defi*, and elbowed his way to the bar.

This was a challenge that no one refused, and a host of rough-bearded men, with varied tones, were soon calling for their favorite drinks. There were some few who already knew Donald among the crowd, and these soon introduced him to the rest, who, before they parted, swore that he was the finest fellow in California, and that they would either fight for or drink with him until all was blue.

The landlord showered blessings (mentally) upon his head for the dust which rapidly poured into his hands, until Donald, who began to feel hungry as his excitement cooled, left the bar-room and sat down to the ready-spread table. But his mind still ran on the scene he had witnessed near the lone cabin, and the food lost its relish.

Leaving the table he went to the bar and took another drink of the diabolical concoction that was sold for brandy. This, added to what he had before imbibed, rendered him just reckless enough to care little what he did, and leaving the "hotel" he wandered over the city. Whenever he met a friend, one or the other was sure to give the customary invitation, "Take something?" the result of which was that in a short time Donald walked as though he were trying to perform the "Highland fling." Not very heroic, but natural.

Thus he spent the first hours of the night, visiting the saloons, concert-halls, and the like, until, at about midnight, he and several boon companions entered a groggery that had

ten-pin alley connected with it. This was a comparatively new feature in that part of the country at the time in question, and Donald challenged one of his comrades to a game, calling for a bottle of champagne.

Knocking off the head with a blow from the edge of his palm, he took a swallow, and then hurled it at the pins, but it missed them, and striking in the yielding sawdust, was unbroken.

"Stand it up for the king pin!" he yelled, and as the order was obeyed he bowled at it, by chance making a "ten strike."

"Hurrah, that's the ticket. Curse the pins, we'll play with champagne bottles. Roll them out, cap I've got the dust and no poor relations!"

This was too good a chance to be missed by the saloon-keeper, and first weighing out the dust from the long purse that Donald tossed him, the bottles were set up at twenty dollars per head, the regular price charged for the "spoiled cider." As may be imagined the miner's exchequer was rapidly diminished at these rates, as he was a fair player, and not so much under the influence of liquor but that he could bowl correctly.

When the purse was emptied the saloon-keeper announced the fact, and Donald then called up the crowd to drink at his expense, paying for it with the heart-shaped nugget that he had at one time destined for Myrla, and then left the building without waiting for the change, although the lump paid the charges fourfold.

He still had a few nuggets and "slugs"—*i. e.* forty-dollar gold-pieces—and as his eye caught an illuminated lantern, displaying on each side the four court-cards of either suit, he entered the building, still followed by a few men who were not yet satisfied with the "treats" he had bestowed upon them, hoping to secure more.

It was a long, low building, half cloth, half slab, but densely crowded and brilliantly lighted up. Here might be seen the Lascar, the Mulatto, the Chilian, the Brazilian negro, the escaped convict from Botany Bay, the red-faced Englishman, the native of the soil, the Mexican; the Frenchman, Spaniard, Portuguese, Chinaman, Kanaka; and nearly every other class or nation is represented. Men of standing, wealthy people, flock here, promiscuously mixed with the lowest classes of all countries.

Here a large table, devoted to *rouge et noir*, first attracted Donald's attention, and placing a "slug" upon the red he moved on without waiting for the result.

At the next table a Californian of smart countenance and sinister aspect deals *monté* for the benefit of the greenhorns who throng around the golden piles in momentary expectation of seeing them flit into their own pockets; but although riches have wings, they do not fly in that direction. In lieu of that the few ounces which the "*squatteroos*" have left them, glide rapidly out of their possession.

Then the faro-players were gathered around the table where a smooth, oily looking Southerner deals, certain of a change of luck *next time*, and verifying the poet's declaration that "man never is, but always *to be blest*." Each sagacious adventurer fancies himself a perfect La Place or Newton, in calculation, and believes that he has at last mastered the complex elaboration of chances, and shall eventually "bu'st the bank."

Unmitigated fool! Even though your powers of calculation surpassed those of Zerah Colburn, you would be sure to lose, even admitting that the game be fairly played. But watch with the eyes of an Argus, and think with the profundity of a Fourier, and still that placid, smooth-tongued arbiter of fortune will look you in the eye, and cheat you out of every farthing you have got.

On all the tables, excepting the last we have noticed, where red and white ivory "chips" were used, piles of the yellow *ore*, like veritable offerings upon the altar of Mammon, make the heart of avarice ache; ay, and infect those who are not very greedy for lucre, with a touch of the *yellow fever*.

Gold in dollars, gold in five-dollar pieces, gold in eagles, gold in double-eagles, gold in "slugs," gold in lumps, gold in bars, gold in dust—gold in every and any shape, meets the glazzled eyes of visitors, look where they will; and those bland gentlemen who cry—"Make your game, gentlemen—no more, the game is made," and who so liberally furnish the sparkling wines *gratis* to the players, stand ready to hand over to you any or all of those glittering piles, *as soon as you win them!*

Such was the place where Donald found himself, and speedily becoming attracted by the hope of regaining what he had lost, he stationed himself at the *monté* table and poured all his

remaining gold upon the *sota de bastos*, or knave of clubs. In a moment it was swept away, and as he had nothing but his weapons left, and not forgetting that those might be needed at any moment, he tore himself away from the house, and finally succeeded in reaching his room at the hotel, where he had had the disturbance with the bully Jack Copeland.

Fortunately mine host knew nothing of the reverses met with by the young miner, else Donald would never have slept beneath his roof, for that worthy's motto was "no credit," and he would have served his own mother the same. But Donald snored on in unconscious innocence, and forgetfulness of the folly he had been guilty of, and the shame together with remorse that would be his in the morning.

But bidding him adieu for the time being, we will turn to the other actors whom we left near the lone cabin.

CHAPTER IX.

A PET FOR GRETCHEN.

WHEN Willie Herbert, or Montsazio, as we must now call him, lost sight of Donald in the darkness as the latter hastened in pursuit of Enoch Mozey (as he must still be termed) he followed after the two at the top of his horse's speed, but seeing that there was no hope of overtaking them with his tired steed or even of being in at the death, and feeling confident that his chum was able to take care of himself, he reined up and rode slowly back to the spot where the main fight had been decided.

This was over, and the white men were dropping in one by one, as they returned from the pursuit. They numbered some twenty, including Willie and Dan Tipberghien. They were mostly middle-aged men, bronzed and hardened with exposure and toil, who had gladly accepted Willie's liberal offer to search for Donald and Mozey, having been extremely unlucky in their mining.

Of the party, two had been killed outright, and several more or less severely wounded during the affray. Then Wren

Snearley returned and invited the party to ride on to the house, where they could procure refreshments, and have their wounds dressed. The Quirk brothers had not yet returned, and Willie little dreamed of whom he was so soon to meet; for in the hasty meeting a short time previously they did not recognize each other, although very intimate acquaintances.

We leave the meeting between mother, sister and brother, to the reader's imagination. It could not be painted by our pen.

It was broad day before the bustle gradually subsided, and then at early dawn, when the brothers came straggling in, the story all had to be repeated. Wren Snearley alone noticed the fresh notches upon the brothers' rifles, and knew that still further installments of their debt had been paid; but he kept his thoughts to himself.

About the middle of the forenoon, the brother and sister started off to the spring, and there Donald discovered them, and their loving caresses as already detailed. When he dashed past them they caught a glimpse of the white face, convulsed and distorted with rage and anguish, but had not the remotest idea that they were the innocent cause of his strange actions, and called after him, but without effect.

But their voices alarmed the household, and when Wren Snearley heard their version, he uttered a long, low whistle, and bluntly said:

"Lord, what critturs these hyar young folks be, 'specially when they's in love. You want to know what's up; well, then, I'll tell you. The young feller is head over ears in love wi' leetle birdy hyar, an' when he see'd you a-billin' an' cooin', why said he, 'my meat's kicked over into the ashes, an' I'll mosey like a notailed bull in fly-time.'"

"But Willie's my brother, Mr. Snearley," stammered Myrla, almost dumbfounded at his blunt statement, although perhaps she was not quite so surprised as she pretended, for the little witch had not been entirely blind, nor overlooked Donald's admiration.

"Yas, I know *thet*, but *he* don't, not by a long chalk. I tell you I'm right, an' as I've tuck a powerful fancy to the lad, I'm goin' to folly him up an' see *thet* he don't hurt himself nor nothin'. Ef you've got any word to send, why I'll take it," he added, looking wistfully at Myrla.

"I have none, of course. Why should I?" hesitated the maiden.

"Oh well, ef you wan't him to keep on thinkin' that you an' mister man, hyar, is goin' to make a double on it, why all right. It's all the same to me," he retorted, and moved slowly toward where his horse was standing all ready for a scout that he had intended taking, trying to appear supremely indifferent, but which was a total failure.

"Stay!" hastily exclaimed Myrla, "you may tell him just how it is—"

"Yes, I understand," interrupted Wren. "I'll tell him that you want him to come back ag'in right away," and before she could speak he had darted away and mounted his horse, leaped the stream and galloped off along Donaid's trail.

"How provoking!" she murmured to Willie, but her thoughts were—well, I don't know as it would be exactly right to expose them.

"Never mind, pet, I'll make it all right with him when he comes. But if you *could* only love—like him a little, I mean, I'd be the happiest fellow going. You can't imagine how kind and good-hearted he is. And brave as a lion, too. I declare, sis, I almost wish I were a woman so that I could marry him myself!" declared Willie, enthusiastically.

"Is he?" innocently asked Myrla; "but then I don't love him, and I know he never thought of me as his—well, in that way, you know."

"Yaw, I pees in lofe, nyder, pedder you dinks so, eh?" grunted Jan Weber, who had silently approached them unperceived, and had overheard the last remark.

"Jan, please take this water to the house. Mr. Quirk is waiting for it," said Willie, putting the bucket into the Dutchman's hands and walking off toward a group of cedars not far distant.

"Well, sis, who's next? Really, I must congratulate you. When did you meet these old friends of mine?"

"Night before last."

"Twenty-four hours in their company, and two hearts broken already. But look, there comes Jan again. Shall I leave you together, eh, sis?" laughed Willie, as the elephantine swain was seen waddling toward them.

"Don't, brother, please don't; he almost frightens me!" she pleaded, then paused, for Jan came and sat down by her side.

She jumped up and went on the other side of her brother, who, by placing his hand upon Jan's shoulder, prevented him from following suit.

"What was it you said about love, Jan, a while ago? Were you ever in love?"

"Yaw, I pees in lofe ein, swei dimes, vor shure," quoth Weber manfully.

"Well, tell us about your *first* love, Jan, and then if we have time we will listen to the second," said Willie.

"Yes, please do, Mr. Weber," pleaded Myrla, in reply to a look from Jan.

"Yaw, wöl, I dalks mid you vor a leedle dimes, and dells you all aboud me und mein *lieber*, Gretchen Hoofelglibrauspuggle. Ach, bud she vas a angel ofe a fraulein! Schust like me, she vas so fery blumb, und her hair id vas ret as nefer vas; der olt man he uset vor do lighd de vire mid a biece ofe id. Und den her moud and deeth, dunder und blitzen! dey vas schust mate vor eadink sweitzerkase, und bredzels, Pologna sausages, und sour kraud. Her nose vas *so* leedle schust like a bignud und hit petween two sheeks pigger as bumbkins. Und den her eyes, dey vas more like as leedle creen gooseperries den nodink else I can dinks ofe.

"I vas sdill vadder den as *now*, und she vos more so as me, so id vas all ve could do schust douch vingers ven ve wanted do schake hants. So you see, ofe ve dried do kiss ve couldn'd ad vursd. But Gretchen she vas a awful schmard gal, und von tay she vound oud how. How vas dat, you dinks, eh? Gife it ub? Yaw, so I dells you.

"Veed pooth lay town on der grount, het do het und veet oonther vay, und den kiss ondil ve vas dired! Boody schmard dat eh? Yaw, me dinks so, nyder. Got in himmel, id pees so pedder as nefer vas. I dinks I dastes dem *now*!" murmured Jan, dropping his half-filled pipe and resting his fat, roly-poly head upon his hands, staring vacantly before him, then resuming:

"I gorted Gretchen vor a long dimes, bud she'd nefer say ~~yea~~ ven I'd ask her to be mein vrou, vonlt only say 'Maype

so ; led me dink ofe id a leedle.' Vell, oon tay I dakes mein goon und goes oud a hoonding, vor dinks I,

" 'Gretchen pees fery vond ofe beds, und I'll schust gatch von vor her, und den maype so she'll say *yaw*.'

" As I dinks all dis vay, I valket vor a long diine in der voots, und ven I voket ub I vound meinself schust pack mid olt Mynbeer Hoofelglibrauspuggle's varm, und der hause in vull sighd. I sdoode leaning aginsd der vence, a-dinking ofe Gretchen all der dimes, ven I heert a noise schusd like I ton'd know vat. I beeket ofer der vence, und in der gorn I see'd a leedle bear, eadink der creen corn like nodinks.

" Midout shtopping vor dinking, I shumbed ofer der vence, und grapt holt of der leedle veller, und mid him in mein arms, valket doorts der hause, dinking vad a boody nice bed I'd got vor Gretchen. But der coob he beginnet do holler like der tuyfil, und den I heert a pig roar pehint me, und looking pack, I saw der pig modder pear a-glimeing over der vence, looking schust so mat as never vas.

" Mein himmel, doughd I, I pe's in a nice vix now, vor shure ! But der hause vasn'd fery var off, und I lofed Gretchen so hart, dot off I rooned mid der coob shtill in mein arms, hollering like nodinks vor dem do oben de doör und led me got in. Mein vaterlandt, how ve did schmash town dot gorn ! I rooned so vasd as I pefore nefer did, but der pear she rooned shtill vasder as I, crowlink and schnarlink like blitzen.

" Gretchen stoot in der door gawbing ad us as ve game gloser, und der sighd ofe her tear vase mate mein legs roon shtill vasder. I coult veel der pear's hod preath a-sgorchink mein drowser pehint, she vas so glosd. But I gids do der hause vursd, und pudding mein het mid Gretchen's pody, knocking her oud ofe der doorway, und den poldet der door in der pear's vase, schust savink meinself vrom her glaws.

" Und ven I gids mein preadh und mein pody ag'in, I dakes der goon und schoods der old she-pear as deat as a door nail. I gifes Gretchen der coob vor a bed, bud she vas so mat as der tuyfil, 'cause I puddled her so hart mid mein het, und voultn'd sbeak mid me vor nefer so long a dimes. But I schust acdet as if I didn'd gare nodinks, und boody soon she gomed 'arount ag'in.

" Von vine tay I vas a-valking drough der voots, dinkink

as how much I lofed mein Gretchen, und dryink do make ub mein mindt do ask her vor do pe mein vrou ag'in, de vursd dime I gids a goot chance. Boody soon I heert a leedle noise pevore me, und looking ub I see'd somedinks dot I'd nefer med mid pevore.

"It vas mighdy boody, und I dough, now ofe I gadch dis bed for Gretchen, den she'll be mine vrou, and ve'll life so habby as never coult pe, I a-hoonding und varming, und she a-gooking und sphanking der yoong vons. So I lays town mine schod-gun und pegint do grawl ofer der grount toords der bed, garefully geebing pehit a pig log. Boody soon der ding boked hees het arount der gorner ofe der log, und den I mate a pig schumb und grappet it mit both handts.

"Yaw, I gaughd him vasd, bud I didn'd holt id fery long, vor der tam ding sphit all over mein vase und handts. Got in himmel, how dat did schmell! Dousand tuyfils, how mein eyes und vase schmardet und purnet. I doughd dot I vas killed vor shore, und rolled town mit der grount, hollering schusd like der tuyfil.

"I gids ub und valls town ag'in, a-spidding und a-grying all der dimes, a-roobing mein eyes mid von handt, und a-holt-ing mein nose mid der oonder von so vasd as I coult. I doughd I'd go grazy. Mein vaterlandt, how I dinks tam it mid all der beds und Gretchen do. Dey might all go de ter tuyfil mid a heab vor all ofe me!

"Den der ding schumbbed on dob ofe der log, und schquad-det dere a crinning und a-laughing at mein voony dricks as I dumpled ofer der ground. Den I gids mat, oh, so mat, und schumbs mit mein goon, und schust plows der whole dob ofe of id's het avay ofe id.

"Afder a vile, ven I gids pedder, I dakes up mein goon und der leedle pig schmelling ding, vor I vandet do vindt oud vat sord of a bird it vas, und schdardet mid Gretchen's hause. Mein eyes schmardet se pad as efer, und I shust valket as if I vas digit, esery oonce in a vile pumbing mid a pig dree, boody nigh my prains tind puddlings. I vas schmell so lout dot all der pirds und pugs holted deir noses mid deir glaws as I bassed dem. Mein vase vas so red as a peed, und der tears gebt a-rolling mid mein eyes town as rain, dey schmardet so.

"Bud I gits dere ad lasd, und obening der door, I valket in.

Id vas ayder tark, und der olt man und his vrow und Gretchen
vas sidding glose mid der vire, vaiding soober vor me. Mein
Got in himmel, how dey schumb ven I valket in und dey
schmellet der schmell !

“ Gretchen she bulled up her glothes und stuffed dem indo
her moud und vase ; der olt woman she gife a pig kick, und
dumplet ofer packvarts, grapping der old gat und schticket i
nit her vase do hite der schmell. Der olt gat she didn’t like
dis pedder as so mooch, und pid und scradchet like a tuyfil.

“ Hoofelglibrauspuggle he saw vat vas der madder, und
knocked me mid der boker town, und den grapping der bed
py der dail, schlocked me ofer der copf like nefer vas. I hol-
leret vor mercy, bud he gebt on, und den der olt womans she
trowed der gat mein vase in, und Gretchen she game und
schquaddet righd town on my moud.

“ Dunder und blitzen, I doughd I vas killed vor shure den !
Bud I schust glosed mein deeth ondil dey med drough der vad
und I bulled a biecc glean oud as she shumbed ub. Town
she dumplet ofer der olt man, und I grappet mine goon und
rooned avay so vasd as nefer vas !

“ Id vas a long dimes pevore I gids rid of dat schmell, und
verefer I’d go, der mins und poys vould trive me avay ondil
I hat to life mid der voots all alone mid meinself. Den I
lefd der goontry, und gome out Vesd, und don’d know vedder
Gretchen pe’s alife or nod. Und efer since dat dime, ven I
sees a bolegat, I schust kills it, vor dot vas vat blayed me oud
wid mein *leiber*, Gretchen Hoofelglibrauspuggle,” concluded
Jan, while the surrounding hills echoed with the clear voices
of Myrla and Willie, at jolly Dan Weber’s story.

CHAPTER X.

THE LETTER “ T.”

“ WELL, Jan, you were rather unfortunate, I must say,” said
Willie, “ and I don’t see how you could muster courage
enough to fall in love again. I believe you said you had
found another sweetheart, didn’t you ?” Le asked, mischiev-
ously, to Myrla’s great dismay.

"Yaw, I dinks I gids marriet vor shure dis dime. You dinks pedder so ve too, eh?" replied Jan, leaning forward and nodding at Myrla.

"I think so! why should I—what do you mean, Mr. Weber?" stammered the startled girl.

"You dinks I makes a good hoosbant, eh? I cuess you make boody goot vrow vor me, ofe you is leedle. Yaw; den ve marriet gids, vor shure," declared the self-complacent swain, as he struck a match and lighted his pipe, puffing away at the miniature volcano with great gusto.

"Really, Mr. Weber, if you are in earnest in what you have said, I am very sorry indeed; but I must positively decline the honor," said Myrla, as soon as her astonishment would admit.

"Nein?" grunted Jan.

"Tell him, Willie, please; he scares me," whispered Myrla.

"Do you mean that you want to marry my sister, Jan? Is that what you are driving at?"

"Vor shure!" quoth the Dutchman.

"But you can't. She don't love *you*, and does love Donald."

"Why, Willie, how *can* you? You know I didn't say any such thing!" exclaimed the blushing maiden.

"Mein himmel, I pe's a pigger man as he vas!" ejaculated Weber.

"Yes, that's the trouble; you are entirely *too* big. But now remember, it's of no use, and you must not plague her any more about it. Do you understand?" said Willie, decisively.

"Yaw, I hears," and then they sat in awkward silence for a few moments, when Jan resumed: "Bud your modder, eh, she vas got a schweedheard, yer dinks so?"

"Well, really, Weber, I can't say," laughed Montazio; "perhaps you had better ask her and find out for yourself."

"I vill, by shinks! I musd gid somepody marriet do; a pachelor he pe's vorser as nodinks! I goes now, righd avay," and he waddled off toward the cabin, leaving the brother and sister laughing heartily as they pictured their mother's surprise when Jan Weber revealed his project to her.

The day passed without any event worthy of note, except-

ing that toward night Wesley Quirk came in from a scout, and said that there was still some one lurking around the neighborhood, but whether one of their late foes or otherwise, he could not state. He thought it was a white man, although he wore moccasins, but the nature of the ground prevented him from ascertaining with certainty.

Willie and Dan Tipberghien suspected it was Enoch Mozey, but after a consultation with themselves, concluded not to mention their thoughts, but that on the morrow they would together hunt the intruder out; and if their suspicions were correct, would avenge the murder of their loved comrade, Timothy Jenkins. Of course the youth had no suspicion that the man he had determined to hunt to his death was his own father, for he had been led to believe that he had died during his (Willie's) infancy, by his mother.

Early the next morning Lloyd Quirk, and the two miners that had been killed by the Indians, were buried near the place where they had fallen, and nothing but the three long narrow mounds and rudely carved headboards told their tragic tale.

When this sad duty was over, Willie and Dan slipped away unobserved, and securing their weapons that they had concealed in the brush, they hastened toward the point where Wesley Quirk had discovered the strange trail on the preceding evening. This they had but little difficulty in finding, and then they followed it as rapidly as their skill would admit.

For several hours it led them in a roundabout course, apparently aimless, but at length it approached the lone cabin; although of this they were ignorant, not being very well acquainted with the surrounding landmarks. Just ahead of them could be seen a considerable patch of brier, mostly young growth, and a profusion of shrubbery.

"Dan, you had better go on one side and I'll take the other. It'll be safer," said Willie.

"An' why not folly the footmarks?" asked Tipberghien.

"Because he may be concealed in the bushes and would be apt to give us a shot before we knew it. The chances would be all on his side then. But if we skirt the *motte* we can see if he has passed right through. If not, then we will fix a way to rout him out of his hole."

"Jist as ye say; I'll take this wan," and the Irishman turned to the right, leaving Willie to take the other, and then they began circling the *motte*, keeping as much under cover as possible.

Dan Tipberghien had not half completed his circuit when he fancied he heard a crackling in the bushes just abreast of him, and with a strange want of prudence arose erect from behind the little ridge of sand that had protected him hitherto. He caught a glimpse of a dark form as it sprung up, and then a bright flash, when something hot struck him in the breast, and he fell, with the life-blood gurgling from his mouth.

Then the assassin leaped toward him, and stooping, turned the dying man over. Then he placed an iron instrument upon Tipberghien's forehead, and struck the handle forcibly with the butt of a revolver. Dan opened his eyes at this shock, and with his last dying effort drove the long, keen blade of a Bowie-knife to the hilt in the chest of his slayer.

With a wild yell, Enoch Mozey—Guido Montazio—reeled back and fell senseless to the ground. When the iron dropped from his nerveless hand, the livid stamp of *the letter T.* was branded upon the unfortunate Irishman's brow. But he never knew it. With the avenging blow his life had fled, and he was another victim of that fatal brand.

Willie had heard the rifle-shot, and not knowing whether it was that of his comrade or not, he entered the *motte* and rushed in the direction from whence it had sounded. When about the center of the wood he heard the loud cry given by Mozey as Dan repaid him in kind, and hastened on with increased speed. Then a fearful sight burst upon his gaze.

His first thoughts were for Dan, but all was in vain. The murderer's aim had been but too sure. But upon examination he found that Mozey still breathed, although it was but faintly. The bandage around his head had become displaced, and Willie saw that the entire forehead had been rudely skinned, in places laying the bone bare, evidently having been done by the thief's iron hand to obliterate the letter T.

Willie ran at the top of his speed up the precipitous side of a tall hill, near at hand, with the intention of learning in

above the tops of the cedars and oaks that lay at the foot of the hill he had just surmounted ; for he thought the house was miles away.

He discharged his rifle and uttered a clear, ringing halloo, and in a few moments he saw several of the men run out into view, and look around them for the author of the voice. He called again, and fired two shots from his revolver, and when they saw him, beckoned for them to advance.

When they arrived he quickly told them what had occurred, and led the way to the scene of the tragedy. Mozey was still alive, but unconscious, not arousing when he was lifted and placed upon one of the rude litters that Willie had had made. They did not dare remove the knife, for they knew that if they did so, in all probability he would bleed to death before they could convey him to the house. Then the little cavalcade moved slowly along through the hills, following the cañon, and finally approached the lone cabin.

Willie ran on ahead to explain what had happened, and the wounded assassin was carried into the house where he could have his wound dressed more securely than in the open air ; the corpse being placed in the shade under the spreading bough of the old oak tree, and covered with a buffalo robe. Ethan Quirk cut away the clothes surrounding the wound, but when he saw the direction the knife had taken, and the depth it was driven, he shook his head, for he knew that there was no hope, and that when the weapon should be withdrawn, death would be almost instantaneous.

As he expressed this opinion, Enoch Mozey opened his eyes with a convulsive shudder, and stared wildly around in bewilderment. One of his hands feebly crept up toward the knife that rankled in his breast, as if he would pluck it out ; but the watchful eye and hand of Ethan Quirk frustrated his intention, and pressed his arm down to his side.

The eyes of the branded thief and double murderer turned and rested curiously upon the face of his attendant. Then a puzzled look swept athwart his swarthy visage, and with some difficulty he uttered, in a hoarse whisper :

“ Who are you—where have I seen you before ? ”

“ My name is Ethan Quirk, but I guess you mistake. I don’t think we ever met before to-day.

"Quirk—Quirk, oh, yes, I remember now! Have you forgotten me—am I so greatly changed, then?"

"Why, is it possible? Bah! I'm growing foolish; he's dead long ago," muttered Ethan, keenly scrutinizing the features of the dying man.

"Perhaps not," chuckled Mozey. "So they all thought *I* was dead, too, but I am not. Who was it you thought of?" he added, while the frothy blood oozed from between his teeth.

"Guido Montazio!" whispered the old man.

"And *I* am *Guido Montazio*," sneered the murderer, then, pointing to where Mrs. Montazio stood in the doorway, "and there is my wife! Jennie, why don't you salute your husband, or have you, too, changed your name since I left you?" he added, with a horrible choking laugh, as he struggled to sit erect.

"My God, it is he!" murmured she, and would have fallen to the floor but for the ready support of her son.

"Mother, who is this man, and what does he mean by calling you his wife?" exclaimed Willie, wonderingly.

"It is your—your father, my—husband, child. I thought he was dead, long since!"

"What, *he* my son? What do you mean, woman?" cried Montazio, as he sat upright—excitement giving him strength.

"He *is* your son, born six months after you deserted me. Both he and Myrla thought you had died when they were children," returned the injured wife.

"That accounts for his not conspiring against me with the rest of them. Intuitive filial love and respect!" laughingly sneered Montazio. "Well, I won't trouble you much longer. But, Willie, boy, let me give you some fatherly advice for you to remember me by. If you value your happiness and worldly welfare, never marry an heiress whose father is a miserly old hunk, at least not before he has shuffled off this mortal coil, or you will rue it your entire lifetime, as I have done."

"There is but one thing that I am sorry for, and that is that I did not have a chance to finish off the Dutchman yonder, and that cursed Scotchman, as I did the other two. I leave that debt to you, Willie, as my only legacy. Bah! I'm tired of this fooling!" and he plucked the avenging knife from his breast, the dark life-blood jetting forth, and fell back, expiring before his head touched the floor.

CHAPTER XI.

AS USUAL.

WREN SNEARLEY had but little difficulty in trailing Donald and, riding at a steady, rapid trot, covered nearly as much ground during the first day as did Mylne. For although during the first mad ride the miner rapidly distanced the guide, this was reversed after Donald was aroused from his fit of anger and despair. In fact, at night the two encamped within half a dozen miles of each other, but this Wren did not learn until the next day.

When Donald entered Shasta City, about the middle of the afternoon, Wren Snearley was a good distance behind owing to the increased difficulty of following the trail, and did not reach the town until after dark. He also stopped at the hotel where Donald had put up, and to his delight found that the young miner had engaged a room, and stabled his horse, thus showing that he would not leave before morning at any rate.

Snearley hugely enjoyed the tale of how Donald had polished off the bully, and after eating a mammoth supper, sallied out to look for his young friend, fearing that he might get into further trouble from this affair, for he well knew the revengeful disposition of Jack Copeland, and that he was as restive under a defeat or injury as an Indian, and would stop for nothing when he had a chance to revenge himself.

However, after wandering about for several hours and by some chance always missing Donald, the tall trapper returned to the hotel, and leaving word for him to be called should Mylne intend departing before daybreak, he turned in, and in a very few minutes the room was filled with the *not* very melodious music from his sonorous nasal organ.

At early dawn he jumped up, having slept in his clothes, and was shown the way into Donald's room. He uttered a low, significant whistle, as he saw the flushed, heated face of the young man, the effects of his last night's debauch, and hastened to awaken him. As may be imagined, he was

somewhat surprised to see the old guide, but Wren Snearley made him dress and go down to the spring and thoroughly drench his head and neck before he would answer any of the numerous inquiries put to him.

Then over the rude but substantial breakfast Wren set the lover right regarding Willie and Myrla, capping the climax by delivering the self-concocted message that he had so startled the maiden with. At first Donald sat perfectly bewildered, but when he fully comprehended what it meant, he jumped over the table, much to the detriment of the crockery and edibles, jerking Snearley from his seat, and whirled around the room in a regular "bear-dance."

Wren did not appreciate this kindness, and with an adroit trip of his foot he laid Donald upon his back with a *thud* that shook the whole building, and when the host opened the door to see what was up, the old guide was calmly finishing his meal, while Donald was sitting upon the floor, dolefully rubbing the back of his head. Then Donald told the story of his "tare," as far as he could recall it, which amounted simply that he was dead broke. With much fatherly advice that the culprit promised to obey—indeed, I wonder what he would not have promised just then?—Snearley paid the bill, and ordered the horses to be brought around.

"Look hyar, mister man, is yer weepins in fix?" he asked, as he hastily entered the room after visiting the stable. "'Cause ye'll need 'em afore ye git fur. That stinkin' k'yote, Jack Copeland, is out thar, an' he means mischief. Thar's got to be powder burned fur sartin. How's yer narves?" he added, anxiously.

"Look for yourself," laughed Donald, holding out his arm.

"Bully! you'll do. Ef ye see him raise his hand, plug him 'thout waitin' fur the crack. He's a good shot, but I reckon ye onsteadied his right a leetle, an' that's in yer favor."

"If he makes a fuss, down he goes, by all that's good! I've spared his life twice, but I won't do it again," exclaimed the young miner, as he inspected the priming of his pistols.

"Wal, thar's the critter. Let's mosey. Never ye mind 't'others; I'll 'tend to them. Jest spot 'the bully o' the mines,' as he's called," and holding their revolvers in their hands ready cocked, the two men went to the door.

A few men were standing in a group opposite, and at a little distance from the building ; prominent among them was the big bully. Donald did not hesitate, but leaped through the doorway and to one side, while Snearley took the other, and then both advanced toward the foe.

These were somewhat astonished at this bold action, and all but Jack Copeland fell back on either side. He raised his pistol with an oath, but before the trigger was touched, a bullet from his adversary's revolver crashed through his brain, and he fell forward without a moan, dead.

Then the dark tubes were leveled at the forms of the dead bully's comrades, and Donald spoke :

"There ; you see what he got. I spared his life twice, but he was not content. It was his life or mine, and he got what he should have had long ago. Now, if you let us alone, all right. If not, then he will have company. What is it ; a bullet or a drink ?"

Without an exception they chose the latter, not a few of them declaring that the dead man had been served just right. The drinks were speedily attended to, and then mounting their refreshed horses, the two friends galloped hastily out of Shasta, but too glad to leave its wild life behind them.

On the second day, near night, they reached the cabin, and there was a joyous meeting between Willie Montazio and Donald, while Myrla, the innocent little witch, passed by them and wandered toward the little group of trees where Jan Weber had "popped the question," but of course she did not dream that the handsome young miner would follow her. Why should he ?

But he *did*, and after a confused greeting on either side, Donald said :

"Wren Snearley delivered your message, Miss Montazio."

"Indeed ; and what was it ? I forget."

"That you—you wanted me to—come back," jerked forth Donald.

"Why, the impudent fellow ! I didn't say any such thing !" declared the girl, with a roguish glance at him.

"I am sorry—very sorry ; but I can go away again. Good-by, and may—" muttered the foolish fellow, turning away as his voice faltered, and coming within an ace of boo-hooing.

"Wait, Mr. Mylne. You didn't—how do you—" stammered Myrla, half alarmed, but brightening up as her perplexing lover eagerly turned toward her.

"Did you say—what, Miss Myrla?"

"I didn't give him that message, of course, how could I? But—how—do—you—know—that *I didn't mean it all the same?*" faltered the blushing maiden, and then—

But I never could learn what happened next. Something ridiculous, I know, or they would not be so secret about it.

Our tale is nearly done. Guido Montazio was buried in an unmarked grave, and Myrla never knew that he was her father. The secret of the golden valley, after deliberation, was divulged to the miners who had raised the siege at the lone cabin, and with so many strong hands, working in concert, each had accumulated sufficient of the yellow metal to satisfy their cravings, before winter set in.

The entire party wintered at the lone cabin; alone no longer, another one has been built for the miners, and when spring came again they journeyed together to San Francisco, where Myrla and Donald were married, and thus the party separated, our more particular friends taking the steamer for home.

Jan Weber accompanied them, although the widow declined entering into partnership with him, and at the present time owns an extensive lager-bier brewery in Quincy, where the young couple reside, as do also the Quirk family.

Wren Snearley, some two years after the events narrated heretofore, lost his one remaining eye by the bursting of a pistol, and after his recovery, made his way to Quincy, where he found a hearty welcome and a sunny corner by the fireside in the house of "mister man an' leetle birdy," as he persists in terming Myrla and Donald.

We are happy to be able to state, that after the one recorded at Shasta City, Donald never got on another "tare," and makes a model husband. Never growls when Myrla dances with other partners at the balls she is fond of attending, and once in a while he 'tends the babies while she "runs down town for a moment, love."

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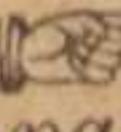
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